Socrates in an Indian Village

(Dehati Socrat)

By

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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LISTENING TO SOCRATES

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To the Villagers

of the

Gurgaon District,

among whom I and my family have spent,

at work and at play, many

very happy years

FOREWORD

Socrates in an Indian Village represents, I believe, the actual record of conversations between the author and some of the Gurgaon villagers with whom he has been so intimately connected for several years past. I have read the book with admiration, and I can wish nothing better for India than that what has come to be known as 'the Gurgaon Experiment' may prove an unqualified success.

The book is lucidly and forcefully written, and lets the daylight into many a dark corner of village life. The truth of Mr. Brayne's indictment is convincing, as also is the logic of his argument, and I hope that those to whom the book is primarily addressed—the villagers of Gurgaon—will be equally open to persuasion. But we must not forget Lowes Dickinson's immortal John Chinaman, who demonstrates so wittingly and effectively that what an Englishman calls white a Chinaman would call black, and that neither is obviously right or wrong. Progress, therefore, is bound to be slow, and our object must be to ensure that it is on right lines, and that a sure foundation is being laid, so that the people will come to realize that the changes are really for their own advantage, and will carry on the work when the enthusiastic initiators of it have gone.

I call to mind that Socrates was put to death by his contemporaries because he pointed out to them too plainly and too often that they were wrong and he was right. I have no such fears for Mr. Brayne; for both he and his wife have not confined their energies to didactics, but have given very ample practical demonstrations that what they teach is within the reach of the ordinary villager. I am glad to see that already in other parts of India their example is being followed, in some places by the landlords themselves, in others by co-operative societies or other agencies. I am convinced that once we can persuade the inhabitants of agricultural India that the key to a great increase in their prosperity and happiness lies in their own hands, we shall

have taken a very big step forward in the reconstruction of Indian life.

Mr. Brayne's book gives a clear and much-wanted lead in this direction, and I recommend it with confidence to all those who have at heart the interest of the Indian ryot.

IRWIN

21st January 1929

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

SOCRATES is a very rude old man, and it is only the obvious sincerity of his motives and the obvious truth of the blunt and crude remarks that he makes that prevent the villagers from at least turning him out of their villages, if not abusing and assaulting the old man, in spite of his grey hairs and venerable appearance.

We all want a Socrates and his gad-fly to stir us up and tell us the real truth. We are caked with hypocrisy, like the village child with dirt, and we conceal our faults and our inconsistencies with soft speech and insincerity, just as the villager hides the dirt and disease of his children with jewellery.

Socrates won't stand this; he calls a spade a spade, and is determined to improve the villages he visits, and he does improve them too. Look at the pits, almost universal now; look at the latrine arrangements, already begun in quite a number of villages; look at the marriage registers, also almost universal; look at the reduction of jewellery and ear-rings; look at the bright Boy Scouts; look at the girls reading at the boys' schools; the vaccination; the inoculation; look at the Persian wheels, the iron ploughs, the 8-A wheat seed, the new sugar-canes, the thousand banks and the twenty-five lakhs of capital in them, the Palwal Show, the chaupāis,[1] the dramas, the lantern lectures, the rural school, the domestic school, the Hissar bulls, the John Hall, the ladies' garden, the women's institute, the children's games, the mixed tennis club. There is much more than this, too much to repeat here. But, above all, the district has been woken up and is ready to listen and ready to experiment, and ready to improve itself.

Socrates is often an awful bore, his conversation is very plain, and he is always repeating himself. He can't help that, however. The remedies for the evils he finds are extremely simple, but they have to be dinned in a dozen times, and from several different

[1] Village glee parties; see Glossary.

points of view, before anyone will take any notice; and sometimes the only way of arousing the village is to be startlingly rude or extremely vulgar. The villager, however, though he often has a quick temper, has a very soft heart, and soon forgives the liberties taken by his old friend.

There is no argument in this book that has not been used a hundred times in village talks and lectures.

The whole object of *Socrates* is to make the villagers think. The world is changing, and customs which may have been good, or at least harmless once, are now mischievous and destructive. We must test all our customs and habits, and see whether in modern conditions they tend to improve our health, our comfort, our well-being and the out-turn of our fields. Keep the good customs by all means and stick to them at all costs, but the bad ones must be rooted out and such new ways learnt as will do us most good. If Socrates has succeeded in doing this he will not have wasted his time, and the villagers will not regret the hard words he has used to them.

Westwood, Gt. Ryburgh, Norfolk F.L.B.
June 1928

NOTE.—Besides brief footnotes in the text itself, a glossary will be found at the end, giving a fuller explanation of the Hindustani words used.

A two-reel film, entitled 'A Tale of Gurgaon, or Heaven Helps Those who Help Themselves,' a great variety of magic lantern slides, copies of the book, *Village Uplift in India*, and copies of Urdu and Hindi pamphlets, posters and songs, can be had from the Rural Community Council, Gurgaon, which is ready at all times to answer any questions or show visitors round.

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FOUR THINGS

SOCRATES went into a village in the Gurgaon District and, meeting several people, after Rām, Rām,[1] he asked them who they were. They replied, 'We are zamindars.'[2]

Socrates looked round him and saw nothing but dirt and poverty—it was a village in the unirrigated part of the district, where crops often fail—so he started his usual questions.

SOCRATES: A zamindar is a man who makes profit out of the land, isn't he?

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: You are rich, then?

VILLAGER: Certainly not. What a foolish question, old man! (*They had not recognized the sage.*)

SOCRATES: Then perhaps you were not quite accurate when you said you were zamindars just now.

VILLAGER (*abashed and recognizing Socrates*): Pardon us, O Socrates; we were certainly wrong when we foolishly described ourselves as zamindars.

The villagers began to be more cautious in their answers as Socrates went on with his questions.

SOCRATES: Then what are you, my friends?

VILLAGER: Well, anyway, we are human beings.

SOCRATES: Of course, you must be. By the way, human beings are vastly superior to the animals, are they not?

VILLAGER: Why, yes; they surely are.

Just then Socrates saw a very dirty little boy playing with a nice clean little puppy.

SOCRATES: That boy is very dirty.

VILLAGER: Yes, sir; our children don't get much washing, I fear, hereabouts. We are poor people, and what with making dung-cakes and grinding corn and cooking food, and so on, there's little time left for the women to enjoy such luxuries as washing children.

[1] The usual Hindu greeting. [2] Peasant farmers.

SOCRATES: That puppy is very clean, isn't it?

VILLAGER: Yes; its mother licks it all over many times a day and keeps it spotlessly clean.

SOCRATES: But I thought you said human beings were superior to the animals. Is a dirty child superior to a clean one?

VILLAGER: No, sir, pardon us; we seem again to have made a mistake. We are not superior to the animals, in cleanliness at any rate.

SOCRATES: Well, anyway, human beings are literate and the animals are not.

VILLAGER (*hastily*): Certainly, sir; human beings read and write and have many books.

SOCRATES: Can you read?

VILLAGER: No, sir; I cannot.

SOCRATES: And you?

SECOND VILLAGER: No.

SOCRATES: And you?

THIRD VILLAGER: No.

SOCRATES: But you said just now you were human beings, did you not?

VILLAGER: Sir, pardon us; we are cattle and very ignorant.

SOCRATES: But cows keep their calves clean, and you don't keep your children clean, so how can you be cattle?

VILLAGER: What can we say? What shall we do?

SOCRATES: Well, it seems the first thing to do, if you aspire to be considered human beings, is to clean your villages and your children. To clean your village you must remove every bit of dirt daily to pits six feet deep dug all round the village, and you must wash your children daily.

VILLAGER: Sir, so will we do. We promise it.

Socrates then walked with the people and talked for some time, and they began to forget the earlier lesson. Suddenly on the path they saw a dung-beetle pushing a ball of dung towards its hole. Without thinking, one of the villagers laughed and said, 'Look, sir, at the dung-beetle. What a horrid creature it is! Why did God make such an inferior thing?'

SOCRATES: God is wonderful indeed. This beetle makes balls of dung and rolls them to his home and lives in a dark hole in the ground without light or air. Is it not so?

Villager: Indeed, sir, so he does, the contemptible creature!

Socrates: Do your wives and daughters make dung-cakes, and do they take their children with them when they go to make dung-cakes, and do not the children play with the dung and the dung-cakes?

Villager: Dung-cakes are a necessity to our life for cooking milk and lighting the hookah.

Socrates: That was not my question. I may have something to say about that necessity later on, but I merely asked if your womenfolk and children made these cakes.

Villager (*doubtfully*): Yes, sir; they do.

Socrates: Have you any windows in those mud houses you live in?

Villager: We are afraid of thieves, sir.

Socrates: I did not ask that. If everyone had windows in his house, then you would all be the same as now and the number of thieves would not increase. Besides, I might say a lot about that subject, too, and why thieves come to your houses. But I merely asked whether you had windows to your houses.

Villager: No, sir; we have not.

Socrates: Then your houses are dark?

Villager: Yes, sir.

Socrates: Then you make cakes of dung and live in houses without air or light. In what way, then, are you superior to the dung-beetles?

Villager: It seems, sir, that we are not.

Socrates: Then in order to be classed as human beings, besides cleaning your village and children, you must stop making dung-cakes and put windows into your houses.

Villager: Yes, sir; we confess that your reasoning is true.

At that moment in their walk they found a bitch with six puppies, three dogs and three bitches, and she was cleaning and feeding all six.

One of the villagers threw a stick at the dog and shouted to it to drive it out of the way.

'Please don't do that,' said Socrates. 'That dog seems in some ways to be much superior to human beings.'

The villagers were rather annoyed at this, but, fearing the sage's tongue, they said nothing.

They then passed the village primary school, and about thirty little boys were at their lessons. Socrates seemed very puzzled, and after some time he said:

Are there no female children in this village?

VILLAGER: Of course there are; just as many as the boys.

SOCRATES: Then why are there not thirty little girls reading here?

VILLAGER (*laughing*): Of course not; girls don't learn to read and write. That's only for boys.

SOCRATES: Then you treat boys and girls differently?

VILLAGER: Yes, of course; who wants girls? It's boys that count.

SOCRATES: But they come from the same parents, don't they?

VILLAGER: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And they will be the mothers of your grandchildren?

VILLAGER: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And your own mothers were once little girls?

VILLAGER: Yes.

SOCRATES: The woman is responsible for the home?

VILLAGER: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the better the woman is the better will be her home, and the better and happier her husband and her children?

VILLAGER: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: Then surely you ought to treat your girls better than you do your boys, considering their duties to their homes, their husbands and their children are so very important.

VILLAGER: Yes, sir; we must confess that you are again right and we wrong.

SOCRATES: Then that dog you despised so much just now was wiser than you, in that it treated all its children equally, and did not prefer the dogs to the bitches?

VILLAGER: What shall we say, sir? We seem to be all wrong in our ways of life.

SOCRATES: Then we may conclude that if you wish to be numbered among human beings you must do four things, not three:

1. Clean the village by putting all the dirt and rubbish into deep pits, and clean the children.
2. Stop making dung-cakes.
3. Make windows in your houses.
4. Send the little girls to school as well as the boys.

VILLAGER: Yes, sir. It certainly seems as if we can hardly claim to be human beings till we do all this.

SOCRATES (*rising*): Well, I must go home; it is getting late. I have enjoyed my visit to the village. May I come again on my walks and talk when I am feeling lonely?

VILLAGER: Certainly do, sir; and I hope you will find human beings here when next you come.

SOCRATES: Good-bye. I hope so too.

VILLAGER: Good-bye, sir.

FEVER

WHEN Socrates next visited the village he found most of the people down with fever.

'This is terrible,' he said. 'I suppose there can be no remedy for fever and no way of warding it off, otherwise such wise people as you villagers would not be now lying helpless.'

An ex-soldier answered at once, 'In the army I never had fever. The authorities used to put a little kerosene on all the pools and puddles and ponds once a week, and used to make us take quinine twice a week and sleep in mosquito nets. If we forgot to use our nets we got severely punished.'

SOCRATES: Then why have you all got fever here? I suppose you all take the precautions this clever soldier has just told us about?

VILLAGERS: He never told us all this before, and I don't believe it is true, as he doesn't do it in his own house.

SOCRATES: O fauji,[1] how false this must be! A sensible man like you must have got nets for all your family, and made them take quinine regularly, and put oil on the pools of stagnating water.

FAUJI: I brought several nets home from the army, but my wife made them into shirts, as no one used them.

SOCRATES: You don't mean to say that they disobeyed you and did not use the nets you brought! You must have given them strict orders, and used one yourself and insisted on their using them too.

FAUJI: I did not always use mine, and they never used theirs.

SOCRATES: Then your great reputation for maintaining discipline in the army is of no use in your home.

FAUJI: So it seems.

SOCRATES: And the army wasted its time teaching you how to avoid fever.

'Then, villagers!' said Socrates, 'you have never heard of quinine?

[1] Military or ex-military man.

VILLAGERS: Indeed, we have. The master teaches about it in the school and the zaildar[1] brought some pills and gave them to us and they were very useful.

SOCRATES: Then why don't you take it every day and cure yourselves?

VILLAGERS: There are no more pills.

SOCRATES: Quinine is very useful stuff, is it not?

VILLAGERS: Very.

SOCRATES: It is for sale in the bazaar, two miles away, I suppose?

VILLAGERS: Surely it is.

SOCRATES: Every day's fever means a loss of about a rupee at least?

VILLAGERS: Quite a rupee just now, at sowing and harvest times.

SOCRATES: Quinine is very expensive?

VILLAGERS: Oh dear, no! Five hundred pills for eight rupees.

SOCRATES: You go fairly regularly to the bazaar to buy salt and spices for cooking?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Quinine is just now far more valuable than spices?

VILLAGERS: Assuredly.

SOCRATES: You do not wait for the zaildar to come and distribute spices free?

VILLAGERS: No, of course not; we are not beggars.

SOCRATES: But you want quinine free?

VILLAGERS: The sarkar[2] supplies it.

SOCRATES: Apparently the sarkar did supply a few pills to show you the value of it. Does that mean that you must now waste your harvest and sowing time, and perhaps die for want of it, when a few pice will buy all you want?

VILLAGERS: Oh, sir, pardon us! We are very foolish. We will at once buy enough quinine to keep off fever for a year.

SOCRATES: But what about mosquito nets?

VILLAGERS: Sir, we are poor men and cannot afford these luxuries.

SOCRATES: I see you men have ear-rings in your ears and your children have bangles and anklets. Will those keep off fever?

[1] Leading rural notable. [2] Government.

VILLAGERS: No, certainly not.

SOCRATES: Wouldn't it, then, be wiser to buy mosquito nets instead of these trinkets?

VILLAGERS: Yes, sir, it would indeed.

SOCRATES: You love your children?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: You would rather have a healthy child without trinkets than a sick one with trinkets?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then would not a mosquito net and a few pills of quinine be better than an ear-ring or a wristlet?

VILLAGERS: Indeed, it would be.

SOCRATES: I hope you will do this, as it is very sad to see a whole village prostrated with fever and the children sickly and weak, when a little care and thought would put it all right.

VILLAGERS: We will do our best, O wise philosopher.

SOCRATES: Good-bye, my friends. I must go now.

VILLAGERS: Good-bye.

CASTE AND DEFILEMENT

SOCRATES was sitting, as usual, with the village elders, when a Chumār[1] came along, and was rudely told to sit apart from the zamindars.

SOCRATES: What has he done to deserve this treatment?

VILLAGERS: He is a Chumār, of course.

SOCRATES: Why should a Chumār sit apart from you?

VILLAGERS: He is low-caste and unclean.

SOCRATES: If he touches you, you will be defiled?

VILLAGERS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: You were all born in this village?

VILLAGERS: Why do you ask? What are you aiming at?

SOCRATES: Never mind what I am aiming at. I am an old man and my thoughts ramble sometimes.

VILLAGERS: Yes, we were all born here.

SOCRATES: When a child is to be born you send for a wise woman?

VILLAGERS: Of course. There is a dai[2] in this village.

SOCRATES: She is a zamindar's wife, I suppose?

VILLAGERS: Certainly not. This is no work for our women.

SOCRATES: Then who is she?

VILLAGERS: A Chuhri.[3]

SOCRATES: The dai, when she attends your wives, touches them?

VILLAGERS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And she is the first person to touch the new-born child and attend to it, and her finger is the first thing that goes into its mouth?

VILLAGERS: That is so.

SOCRATES: Then your wives and mothers and yourselves are all defiled from the moment of your birth. Where is your caste gone, O villagers?

Some of the villagers were very angry at this, but the more

[1] Chumārs are a tribe of untouchables. [2] Midwife.
[3] Chuhras, another tribe of untouchables.

sensible among them admitted their stupid inconsistency, and bowed their heads in shame.

SOCRATES: When you get a thorn into your hand and it swells up, what do you do?

VILLAGERS: We go to the doctor, if it will not get well without.

SOCRATES: The doctor, of course, is a Chumār, the husband of the woman who attends your wives?

VILLAGERS: Certainly not, O Socrates; your suggestions are unworthy of you. The doctor is a high-caste college gentleman.

SOCRATES: Whom do you call when your cow is going to calve?

VILLAGERS: A sensible zamindar who understands these things.

SOCRATES: Child-bearing is a difficult and painful thing for a woman, and may be dangerous?

VILLAGERS: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: You have not much affection for your wives, and don't care much whether they and their babies live or die?

VILLAGERS: Our wives cost us much money and we want children very much and love them dearly. We have no desire to see our wives or children die.

SOCRATES: Then when your hand hurts you, you get a doctor; when your cow calves, you get a clever zamindar; but when your wife is in trouble you get the dirtiest and lowest caste woman in the village?

VILLAGERS: Sir, pardon us. We are very ignorant.

SOCRATES: Hadn't you better send some of your own women to the Health Centre at Gurgaon and get them trained, so that your wives may be attended by clean, clever, trained women of their own sort, and not by dirty, untrained, ignorant women of the very lowest caste available?

VILLAGERS: Sir, we will do so at once. We are ashamed of our cruelty and carelessness.

SOCRATES: But as for this question of defilement, filth and dirt defiles, does it not?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: What do you do with the filth and rubbish of the village?

VILLAGERS: The sweepers throw it in heaps round the village.

SOCRATES: And often inside it too?

VILLAGERS: Yes; these people are idle and will not take it away.

SOCRATES: Where do your people go to visit nature in the early morning?

VILLAGERS: In the fields nearby.

SOCRATES: And sometimes in and around the village and on the roads?

VILLAGERS: Yes, unfortunately; people are often too lazy to go farther.

SOCRATES: All this stuff dries in the sun?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And when the wind blows it rises into the air?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: When the cattle go out in the morning and come home in the evening, their trampling fills the air with dust?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: When it rains, it is washed into the pond where the cattle drink, and where you wash, and sometimes drink too?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And it is washed by the rain into pools by the wells, and pollutes that water too?

VILLAGERS: Sometimes that too.

SOCRATES: And you bring it in on your shoes sometimes?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we fear so. Even that happens sometimes.

SOCRATES: When your wives are grinding the corn this dust will fall on the flour?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And when your wives are cooking it will fall on the food?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And it falls on the water as it is brought from the wells?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then you are always eating a certain amount of village filth and sweepings?

VILLAGERS: So it seems.

SOCRATES: And you drink it in the water?

VILLAGERS: Apparently.

SOCRATES: And breathe it in with the air?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then you are defiled every day of your lives by what you eat, drink and breathe. Why bother about Chumārs? Would it not be better, before boasting about your caste and holding the Chumār as untouchable, to dig deep pits for all your manure and village filth and sweepings, and insist on everyone—men, women and children—using these pits as their latrines, instead of making the whole village filthy and yourselves defiled by your present lazy, promiscuous and filthy habits?

VILLAGERS: We will try and do something, but it is very hard to uproot the customs of ages.

FETCHING WATER FROM THE WELL

JEWELLERY AND THE PROPER POSITION OF WOMEN

THE village elders were all sitting round talking to Socrates when two women passed, one carrying water and the other a bundle of cattle-fodder. They were both covered with ornaments, mostly silver, but some gold as well.

'Friends,' said the sage, 'I should like to discuss the question of jewellery with you. My mind seems confused and I cannot understand the matter.'

VILLAGERS: What is your difficulty, O wise man?

SOCRATES: Why do your womenfolk wear jewellery?

VILLAGERS: What a question to ask! Why, we all wear a certain amount, both we and our children, boys as well as girls, and the women wear plenty.

SOCRATES: Yes; but why?

VILLAGERS: For several reasons, we suppose. It is the custom and it looks well, and they and we all like it.

SOCRATES: You like it because it is the custom and you would be thought ill of if you did not follow the custom; but a thing is not necessarily right because it is a custom, I suppose?

VILLAGERS: Why not?

SOCRATES: Well, if some villagers made a custom of stealing, would you call it right?

VILLAGERS: No, certainly not.

SOCRATES: Then customs are not necessarily right just because they are customs?

VILLAGERS: No, we suppose not.

SOCRATES: Then you must justify the wearing of jewellery on better grounds than that of mere custom?

VILLAGERS: Then we wear it because it looks well.

SOCRATES: But those women were unwashed and wearing the oldest and dirtiest clothes possible, and those children playing over there, with silver wristlets and anklets, look as if they had never seen water, and what clothes they have are mere rags.

VILLAGERS: Well, the jewellery makes them look better, anyway.

SOCRATES: What an amazing thing to do! You allow yourselves and your families to go dirty and in rags when washing costs nothing and clothes not a very great deal, and then counteract the slovenly and dirty result by expensive jewellery?

VILLAGERS: No, but jewellery makes them look much better.

SOCRATES (*loudly and angrily*): God made them beautiful, and you spoil what God made with rags and dirt, and then try and hide it with jewellery!

VILLAGERS: Sir, you put us to shame indeed.

SOCRATES: God made one hole in your ear to hear and learn sense with, and you make a second hole to hang trinkets in, and out of that hole goes all the sense you learn with the other!

VILLAGERS: Don't mock us, sir; we will try and improve ourselves.

SOCRATES: But again, the more you wear this wretched jewellery the quicker it wears away?

VILLAGERS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And the more the women wear it, the more they envy each other's jewellery, and the more they demand from their menfolk?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: Then surely the less it is worn the better in every way?

VILLAGERS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: Then, of all the silly things to allow, surely the silliest is to allow these smart ornaments to be worn with dirty workaday clothes—and for all sorts of home and field work? Surely the only sensible thing is to keep your jewellery for holidays and mēlas[1] and great occasions, and only wear them when you are washed and in clean clothes?

VILLAGERS: That is but reasonable.

SOCRATES: And surely then they will have the greatest effect?

VILLAGERS: Yes; but our women insist on them and demand them.

SOCRATES: If they demanded poison, would you give it them?

[1] Fairs.

VILLAGERS: Certainly not; what a suggestion!

SOCRATES: Then you approve of jewellery just as much as they do?

VILLAGERS: If it comes to that, we are afraid we do.

SOCRATES: Then don't blame the women for this awful waste.

VILLAGERS: It is not waste, anyway. The jewellery is there and is a valuable thing.

SOCRATES: You spend a hundred rupees on jewellery and get how much?

VILLAGERS: If the goldsmith is honest, about eighty rupees' worth; otherwise, sixty or seventy rupees' worth.

SOCRATES: And it wears away, till in ten years about twenty rupees' worth is left?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And if a thief comes along it's gone in a night?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is true.

SOCRATES: And for fear of thieves you can't sleep at night if you have a lot of jewellery, and ruin your health by allowing no windows in your houses? A valuable thing indeed! Now suppose, instead of spending a hundred rupees on jewellery, you put it in the co-operative bank, what would happen in ten years?

VILLAGERS: It would become about two hundred rupees, so they say.

SOCRATES: Then wherein is your jewellery valuable compared to that?

VILLAGERS: We are indeed the slaves of custom.

SOCRATES: But if you have no money and your wife wants jewellery, what then?

VILLAGERS: We borrow.

SOCRATES: Then the jewellery is wearing away while the debt is mounting up?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we fear so.

SOCRATES: Worse and worse, O foolish villagers! When will you learn sense?

VILLAGERS: Sir, but our wives and children would not be happy without them.

SOCRATES: I think we all desire that which is beautiful, and all desire to be happy. It is part of the divine spirit that is in us.

VILLAGERS: Sir, you have interpreted our thoughts as we could not do ourselves.

SOCRATES: And you think that jewellery will satisfy your desire?

VILLAGERS: What else can we do in our villages?

(Just then a mare passed, with a foal gambolling by her side.)

SOCRATES: They are both beautiful and happy and they wear no jewellery, and yet man is superior to the animals, is he not?

VILLAGERS: Yes, he is supposed to be; but you make us very doubtful about it, Socrates, with all your questions.

SOCRATES: Then your children are not always very happy, I fear?

VILLAGERS: Well, they play a good deal, but they cry a lot as well.

SOCRATES: Well, how can a home be cheerful that is full of dirt, disease, suffering and misery? How, then, do you explain the matter, that the animals are happy and beautiful and your women and children are often neither?

VILLAGERS: How can we, O Socrates?

SOCRATES: May I try?

VILLAGERS: Please do.

SOCRATES: Well, I believe the first reason is that the animals are clean, and cleanliness brings health, and health brings happiness. They live in the open air, and they keep themselves and their young scrupulously clean. You live in filthy villages, with every sort of muck, rubbish and excrement rotting all round and blowing into your food and water; you breathe it into your lungs; flies sit on it, and then on your food and on your children's eyes and lips; you live in dark, windowless houses where light and air cannot penetrate; your women rarely wash either themselves or their children; your health is weakened and you are the prey of every disease that comes. Be clean, clean your children, wash your clothes, have windows in your houses, clean your villages, adopt sanitary habits of living, and your women and children will be clean and healthy and, therefore, happy.

VILLAGERS: Sir, you are very hard. We cannot do all this.

SOCRATES: Have I told you anything that costs any money?

VILLAGERS: No, indeed; you haven't.

SOCRATES: Then it is only energy and spirit that is lacking?

VILLAGERS: We fear your accusation is only too true.

SOCRATES: In fact, my remedy will save you money, as you will not want so much of this wretched jewellery if you follow my advice.

VILLAGERS: That is so, sir.

SOCRATES: Surely clean and healthy women and children without trinkets will be better and more beautiful than dirty ones loaded with jewellery?

VILLAGERS: Of course they will.

SOCRATES: And why not spend the money so saved on educating them a bit, and in providing quinine and medicines for them when they are ill, and mosquito nets for them when the rains come?

VILLAGERS: That is but common sense too, O Socrates. Yes, indeed; but our women will always want jewellery.

SOCRATES: By all means give it them in reason, and if you can do it without borrowing. I am no puritan, O villagers.

VILLAGERS: That will not satisfy them.

SOCRATES: Why?

VILLAGERS: They are not always very happy in their homes, we fear; they have no rights, and they think that if they are loaded with jewellery their husbands will have more respect for them and treat them better, for fear that they will run away and take their jewellery with them. Moreover, if by God's will they become widows, their jewellery will be a great comfort to them.

SOCRATES: Then her jewellery is about the only property a woman has?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: So they think that they had better get what they can while they can, and so they worry you for jewellery?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is it.

SOCRATES: Then their jewellery is a sort of security for their husbands' good conduct?

VILLAGERS: Spare us, Socrates. You are too hard on us to-day.

SOCRATES: You do not respect your wives much, then?

VILLAGERS: No, indeed; they respect us.

SOCRATES: Women are not held in much importance, then?

VILLAGERS: No, of course not.

SOCRATES: You were born of women, your children were born of women, and your daughters will be the mothers of your grandchildren?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then your womenfolk are all part of you?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And if they are unworthy of respect, then you and your children and grandchildren are equally unworthy of respect?

VILLAGERS: So it seems.

SOCRATES: You love your children?

VILLAGERS: Devotedly.

SOCRATES: And yet you despise and maltreat the one person responsible for them, and from whom they derive their nourishment, character and training in the most important years of their lives! Your action seems absolutely idiotic. Surely your women are entitled to far more respect than you are, as it is they who are responsible for the production and upbringing of your children and the maintaining of the race, and the running of the home?

VILLAGERS: That is correct.

SOCRATES: They are, in fact, your partners in this work?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Perhaps, then, if you treat them as such and give them the respect they deserve, and educate them, so that they may learn how to bring up their children properly, they will not demand so much jewellery from you, but will be content with their clean, healthy and beautiful children and their happy homes?

VILLAGERS: Sir, we cannot escape this conclusion.

SOCRATES: Are children and young animals the only beautiful things God made?

VILLAGERS: No, indeed; God made flowers too.

SOCRATES: Your homes are full of flowers then, as you all love beautiful things and are prepared to run into debt to get them?

VILLAGERS (*laughing*): No, we have no use for flowers.

SOCRATES: Then you don't really love beautiful things?

VILLAGERS: We do; but we have no time to plant them, nor do we know how to do it nor where to get the seeds.

SOCRATES: Why should not your partner in the home learn about flowers? I'm sure she will find time to grow a few to beautify your home. A good woman always has time to make her home beautiful. May I suggest, too, that if they still want ornaments they should learn to make lace and embroidery when they are young, and teach their daughters to do so too, so that they will compete with one another in making beautiful things of lace and embroidery, or growing beautiful flowers, instead of wasting your money in jewellery? Then the leader of the women will be the cleverest woman, and not the woman whose husband has the biggest bill at the goldsmith's.

VILLAGERS: O Socrates, we will try it.

SOCRATES: Then it seems that the conclusion of the matter is that you must educate your women, treat them with respect as equal partners of the home, help them to make the home beautiful and keep the children clean and happy, get them taught to use their fingers in making themselves and their children beautiful, and taught to grow flowers in the home. You must make your villages also clean and habitable. There will then be little need for jewellery, and you will be able to put your spare money in the bank and see it increase year by year, instead of seeing your jewellery wear away year by year and your debts increase. Above all, your life and that of your family will be cheerful and happy.

VILLAGERS: Indeed, sir, your advice is sound and we will try and follow it out in practice, but it will be extremely hard to do all these things even in many years.

WATER, FUEL AND MANURE

SOCRATES came into a village and found stacks of dung-cakes inside the village, women busily making more, and men sitting on charpoys,[1] smoking, everything dirty and neglected and showing signs of extreme poverty.

'Salaam!' said Socrates. 'How are you, my friends?'

'You may well ask us how we are,' replied the villagers; 'our land is bodi,[2] and what little crops there are the wild pigs and the rats are eating, the rain has not come, and the fields are drying up. We are still weak from last autumn's malaria; there is nothing for our cattle to eat, and very little for ourselves to eat. What need to ask how we are?'

Just then a puff of wind came and blew up a lot of dirt and muck into the faces of Socrates and those who were sitting near him. The villagers did not seem to mind, but it made Socrates cough and his eyes smart with pain.

'That is pretty nasty,' said Socrates.

'It is nothing,' said the villagers, 'that always happens when the wind blows. We are quite used to that sort of thing here.'

'But, then,' said Socrates, 'why are you complaining that your fields are bodi? If all that stuff was put into pits, and then, when it had matured, if it was taken out to the fields as manure, it would soon make your fields fertile.'

'Oh! we have no time to do that sort of thing; we are too poor to clean our village; that is only a luxury for rich men.'

'But,' said Socrates, 'dirty villages mean poverty; what makes your village filthy will make your fields rich. But then, why aren't you rich? I don't understand why you are not rich. As I came along the village I saw dozens of dead trees lying on the ground rotting. Nobody but rich people could afford to neglect their wood which grows free of charge.'

[1] String beds; the usual seats in a village.

[2] Wreck; a favourite expression in villages to explain the exhaustion of the soil from want of manure.

'What ought we do to with the wood then? There is no market for wood here,' said the villagers.

'Burn it to cook your food and boil your milk.'

'Oh, no; we use dung-cakes for that.'

Socrates burst into laughter.

'Why are you laughing?' said the people.

'I can't help laughing,' said Socrates. 'You people are so funny! There you are complaining of the weakness of your fields and your own poverty, but here you are burning dung-cakes. Dung has ten times more value as manure than it has as fuel. Meanwhile white-ants are eating your dead trees. Poor people can't afford to feed white-ants.'

'What is that stack of cakes worth?' said Socrates.

'Oh, about five rupees,' said the villagers.

'As manure how much is it worth?' asked Socrates.

'It would add about ten maunds[1] of grain and an equal amount of straw to the crop where it was spread,' replied the villagers.

'Say fifty rupees, then?' asked Socrates.

'Not less, at any rate,' replied the villagers.

'Then that explains why your land is weak and you are poor,' said Socrates.

'How long does it take your wife to make a stack?'

'About three months,' said the villagers.

'Then three months of her dirt and degradation is worth five rupees,' said Socrates.

'What do you pay the darzi[2] for having your shirt made?'

'Four or six annas,' said the villagers.

'But how long will it take him to make it?' asked Socrates.

'A couple of hours,' said the villagers.

'But how long will it take your wife to make four annas' worth of dung-cakes?' said Socrates.

'Nearly a week,' said the villagers.

'And would it not be cheaper for your wife to make the shirt instead of making the dung-cakes?' said Socrates.

'My wife can't sew,' said a villager.

'Of course she can't,' said Socrates. 'Since she was born she has been the slave of the corn-mill and dung-cake. Which is

[1] Maund = 80 lb. avoirdupois. [2] Tailor.

the more honourable work—making the dung-cakes or sewing clothes?'

'Why, making clothes, of course,' said the villager.

'And yet the clothes are made by the darzi, whom you call a menial, and the dung-cakes by your wives, who you consider of superior caste,' said Socrates.

'Yes,' said the villagers. 'That is so.'

'And wouldn't it be more sensible,' said Socrates, 'to let the darzi make the dung-cakes and your wives make the clothes?'

'Oh, no; the darzi won't pat the cakes,' said the villagers.

'No, I don't suppose he would,' said Socrates; 'he is not such a fool. But I don't intend these cakes to be made. I think the making of dung-cakes is all the cause of your poverty.'

'How are we going to cook the food and boil the milk?' said the villagers.

'Why, with the hundreds of maunds of dead trees which are lying rotting outside your village,' said Socrates, 'and all the other waste products of your crops, the stalks of cotton, arhar,[1] til,[2] sarson,[3] grass, etc.'

'Yes, but the women will have to sit by and watch the milk boiling,' said the villagers.

'Why shouldn't they?' said Socrates. 'The time now spent on making dung-cakes will be spent on watching the milk being boiled; and while they are watching the milk they will be making shirts for you or for your children or for themselves, so that you need not pay the darzi any more.'

'At Palwal Show I saw a "separator" working, and after separating the milk not only was there more and cleaner ghi,[4] but it only required one-fifth of the fuel to make it.'

'But,' added Socrates, 'you told me some time ago you had no cattle fodder.'

'Yes, Socrates; certainly we are short of fodder for our cattle,' said the villagers.

'And is it not due to the same reason?' said Socrates. 'You do not take your cow-dung, rubbish, sweepings, etc., to the fields, and how can your fields grow fodder unless you manure them?'

'But even if we did manure them, there is no rain to ripen the crops.'

'But what about the jheel[1] that I saw on the way?' said Socrates.

'That jheel is no use to us,' said the villagers; 'that water only floods part of our land, which we might otherwise have sown.'

'But why not use the water to water your crops?' said Socrates.

'How can we?' said the villagers.

'Why, dig channels and put water-wheels up,' said Socrates.

'Oh! we have never done so before. There is no such custom and we have not got any money,' said the villagers.

'What about taccavi[2] and your village banks?' said Socrates.

'Oh, but the water will dry up in May,' said the villagers.

'Well, anyway,' said Socrates, 'it will ripen all your spring crops, and if any of you is sensible enough to plant sugar-cane, you merely will have to dig a small well and go on watering from that until the rains come and fill your jheel again.'

'But then the pigs will eat our crops,' said the villagers. 'What is the use of sowing cane?'

'Where do the pigs come from?' asked Socrates.

'From the banni,'[3] said the people.

'How do they live in the banni?' said Socrates.

'Under the many hins[4] bushes,' said the villagers.

'But if you don't want pigs, why do you sow hins bushes?' said Socrates.

The villagers laughed and said, 'Nobody sows hins bushes, O Socrates.'

'You are the owners of the banni, are you not?' said Socrates.

'Yes; certainly we are,' said the villagers.

'Then if you don't want hins bushes, why do you allow them to be there?' said Socrates.

'They come of their own accord,' said the villagers.

'Of their own accord?' said Socrates. 'You said you were the owners of the banni. Do you allow hins bushes to grow in your homes?'

'No; certainly not,' said the villagers.

[1] Swamp or lake. [2] Government loan to finance agriculture.
[3] Area covered with trees and bushes.
[4] A dense evergreen bush of wait-a-bit thorns.

'Well, if a hins bush started sprouting in your home, what would you do ?' asked Socrates

'Cut it out,' said the villagers, 'of course.'

'Then why not cut it out from your banni,' said Socrates, 'so that the pigs can't live there ?'

'But why do you keep a banni at all ?' added Socrates.

'Our ancestors set apart this land to provide a grazing ground for the cattle,' said the villagers.

'Then the cattle eat hins, jāl[1] and karīl[2] ?' asked Socrates.

'No ; they certainly don't,' replied the villagers.

'But then the ground is blocked with all these things,' said Socrates.

'That is so,' said the villagers.

'Then your ancestors' object, in leaving a banni for your cattle to graze on, has completely failed, and the only thing that profits by it is the wild pig.'

'O villagers, you are too foolish. Instead of cutting out the jāl, hins, karīl and sowing grass, kikar,[3] shisham,[4] etc., you allow the pasture left by your ancestors to be spoiled, so that there is no grazing for your cattle, and you make of it a refuge for the wild pigs, so that they come out and eat up what little crops you have. You grow no timber for firewood, and what little grows of itself you let the white-ants eat, so that you are compelled to burn the manure ; which means that you cannot manure your crops, and so the land is starved and you can get neither food for yourselves nor for your cattle from it. Your village is full of muck and rubbish, which poisons your children and yourselves, and which should be put into pits, turned into manure and taken to the fields. The water in the jheel you will not use to water your fields. You have got water, fuel and manure, all three of which you waste. Those are the three things which a zamindar requires to make himself prosperous. You waste all three and then complain of being poor !'

[1] A useless shrub. [2] Ditto. [3] Acacia tree, fodder, fuel and timber.
[4] Timber tree.

CLEANING THE VILLAGE, OR 'SELF-HELP'

SOCRATES went into a village when the wind was blowing and he found it most uncomfortable, for the muck and ashes were flying about in the wind and getting into the people's eyes and food and lungs.

'Are you not very uncomfortable,' said Socrates, 'with all this muck getting into your eyes and lungs, contaminating your food and water and giving you diarrhœa, spoiling your health and your children's health, and so on?'

'What can we do?' said the villagers. 'We have told the sweepers to clean it up, but they are getting too independent nowadays. If we box their ears for not working, they will run us in under Section 323,[1] and we shall lose our izzat.'[2]

'Then,' said Socrates, 'this village is owned by sweepers?'

'No; certainly not,' said the people. 'Zamindars are the owners.'

'But,' said Socrates, 'you say it is the sweeper who decides whether you will live in comfort or not. It is the sweeper who decides whether he will clean the village or not. If he cleans it, you are comfortable; if he does not clean it, then you are like what you are now. Surely you are, then, in the hands of the sweeper?'

'We are,' said the people.

'Then surely he is the owner of this village.'

'It looks like it to-day,' said a villager, as he rubbed his eye to get a painful bit of rubbish out.

'But,' said Socrates, 'who made the place dirty and who chucked all the stuff down here?'

'Oh, we and our wives did,' said the people.

'Then if you are afraid that the sweepers won't clean it, why do you chuck it here?' said Socrates.

[1] The section about 'simple hurt' in the Indian Penal Code.
[2] Respect, credit.

'Oh, it is our custom to chuck it here,' said the people.

'Why not chuck it into the pits you have recently dug,' said Socrates, 'instead of chucking it here and hoping that the sweeper will take it away? Your village will then be clean in spite of the independence of the sweeper. But why don't you clean your village yourselves?' said Socrates.

'We are zamindars; cleaning the village is menials' work,' said the villagers.

'Dirtying the village is zamindars' work, and cleaning the village is sweepers' work?' said Socrates.

'Certainly,' said the people.

'Which is more honourable, to dirty a thing or to clean it?' asked Socrates.

'To clean it,' said the people, 'obviously.'

'The sweeper is a higher caste than you are, then?' asked Socrates.

'No; certainly not,' replied the villagers.

'Then why don't you clean the village yourselves?' asked Socrates.

'But there is no custom for us to clean things,' said the people.

'Then why make a custom of dirtying them?' said Socrates. 'The ordinary rule of the world is that as a man sows so shall he reap. Therefore, if a man dirties a village the same man must clean the village. Does your religion forbid you to live in cleanliness?'

'Certainly not,' said the people.

'Then why not clean your village yourselves? If you have to clean it yourselves, you will be very careful not to dirty it,' said Socrates. 'Besides, everything that you take out of the village is going to be used for manure, so the more you scratch and clean the streets the more manure you will get. Collecting manure is farming, isn't it?'

'Yes, the very best farming,' said the villagers.

'Then if you call it the collection of manure instead of street cleaning, it will become an honourable work which a zamindar can do?' said Socrates.

'Yes, that might answer,' said the villagers.

'Then,' said Socrates, 'cease to talk about cleaning the village; make it a rule that every zamindar shall every day collect

as much manure as he possibly can, and your village will never be dirty again.'

'We will try it, Socrates.'

'What it comes to,' said Socrates, 'is that a real zamindar insists upon being the master of his village; he keeps it clean because, if he does not, he will have to clean it himself. Those who rely on menials to clean their villages don't mind how dirty they make them. Those who have to clean the villages themselves are very careful not to dirty them. Therefore the true zamindar, knowing how unhealthy a dirty village is and what good crops come from the manure, collects it, and, by recognizing that the cleaning of the village is merely the collection of manure, he keeps the village clean himself and does not ask anyone else to do it for him.'

'But,' said Socrates suddenly, 'what is that smell of human ordure that I notice?'

'It is because we go out towards the fields to ease ourselves in the morning,' said the villagers.

'And then the wind blows, and there is a smell all day in and round the village; and then the flies come and first sit on this filth and then on the children's eyes, and you cannot understand why they go blind?' said Socrates. 'I suppose you think the flies take off their shoes or clean their feet before they sit on your food or on your children's eyes!'

'But we have always done it; it is a custom,' said the people.

'But,' said Socrates, 'now you have dug these pits why not use them? Put a couple of planks of wood across each pit and a wall or screen round it, and you have the best possible latrine; and the ashes, which every morning you chuck in every street and in every open space, why not chuck them in afterwards? Night soil is an excellent manure and the ashes are excellent manure, and if you use the pit as a latrine and then throw the ashes in, you will get two excellent sorts of manure. You will have no smell in your village, nor will you have ashes blowing about all day and getting into your eyes and your food.'

'We will do so, Socrates,' said the villagers.

'At present,' said Socrates, 'you pretend that, according to your religion, you cannot handle dirt and clean your village, and yet your religion does not forbid you to eat it, drink it, and breathe it.

When the wind blows or the cattle move in your village, all the dirt on the ground rises into the air and you breathe it into your lungs, take it with your food, and drink it with your water!'

'Well,' said the villagers, 'we will never pretend that our religion allows us to do this again. Our religion directs us to be clean, and we will follow your advice and keep our village clean. At the same time, there will be an increase in the supply of our manure and thereby we will get more crops for ourselves and our cattle.'

'That is right,' said Socrates, 'and I hope your village will soon be fit for human beings to dwell in and for children to be born and brought up in. Good-bye, I must go away now, I am feeling a little faint from the smell and the dirt blowing about.'

'Good-bye, Socrates; we will make the place fit even for you to sit in before you come next.'

HELPLESSNESS, OR 'AP HI HOWE'[1]

SOCRATES came into a village one afternoon and sat on a charpoy, looking very puzzled, and the villagers, gathering round him, said, 'What ails you this afternoon, Socrates? You seem disturbed in your mind.'

'I am, indeed,' said Socrates. 'You have always been complaining to me of your poverty, but when I was coming along the village I saw that your fields were being eaten by rats, rat-holes everywhere, and I saw the rats actually nibbling at the crops quite fearlessly as I came along.'

'Āp hi howē,' said the villagers. 'How can we help it?'

'And then I came along a little further and saw your cattle standing out on a bare plain with nothing to eat, and a large banni nearby covered with a dense tangle of hins bushes. I asked the herd-boy, "Why don't they eat that lovely green stuff?" but he just laughed at me. I asked him, "Don't cattle eat jāl, hins and karīl?" and he simply touched his forehead to show he thought I was loose in the head.'

'Certainly,' said the villagers. 'No wonder he thought you were afflicted in your mind, asking him such a question.'

'But,' said Socrates, 'why do you sow hins, jāl, and karīl, if the cattle will not eat them?'

'Āp hi howē,' said the people.

Before Socrates could reply to this there was a tremendous noise of dogs fighting and struggling, and somebody came running up and said that a dog had gone mad and bitten a child.

'Are these dogs of any value to you?' said Socrates.

'No,' said the people.

'Then why do you keep them?' said Socrates. 'I see them in every village with many puppies. If they are of no use to you, why do you keep them?'

'Āp hi howē,' they said.

[1] It happens of its own accord.

'My dear villagers,' said Socrates, 'are you the owners of this village?'

'Certainly we are,' said the villagers.

'Then what is all this Āp hi howē, Āp hi howē you talk about? If you don't want rats, why not destroy them? if you don't want dogs, why not destroy them? if you don't want useless bushes and trees growing on your land, why not destroy them? Why not destroy the useless bushes and trees and sow valuable grass and valuable trees? Why not get rid of all these useless dogs and each keep his own dog and properly feed and train it, so that it becomes his faithful friend and servant? And why not destroy all the rats and have really good crops on your fields? A good zamindar will not allow his grazing ground to be spoilt by useless bushes; he will plant such trees and bushes as he wants there. He will not allow his fields to be eaten by rats; he will destroy the rats. And he will not allow a horde of stray dogs to remain in the village; he will either have no dogs at all, or else keep properly trained and domesticated dogs. If you allow rats in your fields, then you are 'musōn ke maurusi';[1] the rat is the real owner, as he has the first, and often the only, cut at the crops. If you leave the villages to be cleaned by the sweeper, then you are 'bhangi ka ghulām'.[2] If you allow yourselves to be worried by numerous stray dogs, then you are 'kuttōn ka shikar'.[3] If you allow your grazing grounds to be blocked with hins, jāl, karīl, etc., then you are 'hins ka ghulām'.[4]

[1] Tenants of rats.
[2] Sweepers' slaves.
[3] The sport of curs.
[4] The bondsmen of thorns.

VILLAGE DOGS

SOCRATES had just walked through the village, accompanied by a group of villagers. When he had got some distance away from it he said to his companions:

'Now that we have got sufficiently far from your homes to be able to breathe fresh air, untainted by smells and by dust, let us sit down and talk a while. There is a new subject on which I should like information from you. Your village appeared to be full of dogs, but they seemed to have no masters, nor were they doing any useful work, and for the most part they were in deplorable condition—mangy, dirty, and covered with sores. In fact, they were in even worse condition than your children, and that is saying a very great deal! Tell me, do you not look after them at all?'

VILLAGERS: Socrates, we have not the time; besides, they are only dogs, and useless.

SOCRATES: Why, then, do you keep them at all?

VILLAGERS: We are not responsible. They come of their own accord (āp hi howē).

SOCRATES: My dear villagers, how many times must I explain that you are responsible for everything in your villages? You are the masters of the village, not the dogs, and you are therefore responsible for their existence and their behaviour. Now you said that they are useless. From the amount of food they steal, from the noise they make, and from the danger of their going mad and biting you, they are clearly worse than useless, positively harmful.

VILLAGERS: Exactly.

SOCRATES: In that case, why do you not destroy them?

VILLAGERS: Religion and custom forbid it. After all, though they are but dogs, God created them, as He created everything else.

SOCRATES: A very proper answer, my friends. Dogs, like men, are God's creatures. But why, then, did God create dogs?

The dog is a domestic animal. The other domestic animals have all been created for your benefit, the horse for you to ride, the cow to give you milk, and so on. Was the dog given to you simply to be a nuisance and a danger to you?

VILLAGERS: It looks like it, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But, foolish ones, is God, then, to blame? Do you not see that once more you are throwing the blame of your own stupidity and cruelty on God? It is the new proverb again: '*Zamindar ki be-agli, parmeshar ka qasur.*'[1]

VILLAGERS: Explain then, please, Socrates, why God created dogs and gave them to us as domestic animals.

SOCRATES: Listen, my friends. God gave you dogs for the same reason as He gave you cows, for your benefit. In most other countries of the world every dog has its master who looks after it, feeds it, and trains it to help him. A dog thus used is the most faithful servant in the world, for it will serve, love and protect its master at all times. It will guard the house against thieves; kill the rats that spoil the fields or eat the grain in the house; and it will look after its master's property, his food and clothes, while he is away at work. It can be trained to do all manner of work, and farmers especially find it a useful helper. A dog will soon learn to look after a herd of cattle or a flock of sheep, and prevent them from straying, and will round them up and bring them home at its master's command. There are many other ways in which a dog can be useful, but these I will explain when you have learnt its most elementary uses, and you will gradually find out many yourselves. And all this a dog will do simply in return for its food, and a little attention and affection. Surely, then, did not God create dogs with the intention that you should treat them thus, and find in them a blessing instead of a curse?

VILLAGERS: You are right, Socrates. Evidently we have been blind in this, as in other things. God has ordered all things for our benefit, and we have failed to see it.

[1] Providence is to blame for the farmer's folly.

HONOUR YOUR WOMEN

SOCRATES came into the chaupāl[1] in a very cheerful mood, chuckling to himself, and the village elders were so surprised to see him in such an unusual vein that they hardly knew how to address him.

VILLAGERS : Good morning, Socrates. What has happened, old worthy ? Have you found a clean village or a child without dirt and ornaments, or an educated village woman, or what ?

SOCRATES : No, brothers, far from it ; I have got into awful trouble this morning (*and he chuckled again*).

VILLAGERS : Do let us share your mirth, old man. We suffer from your wrath so often, it is but fair we should share your very occasional laughter.

SOCRATES : Very well (*laughing out loud*). I will tell you all about it, but promise you won't be angry when you hear.

VILLAGERS : No, Socrates ; we will not spoil your pleasure by getting angry, whatever you may say this time.

SOCRATES : Well, it was like this : I met a political gentleman and we fell to discussing things, and all went well till he said, with rising indignation and repeated expressions of wrath and bitterness, that 'our India, with its ancient civilization and culture, is not respected as she should be in the world.' I foolishly burst out laughing, and this made memberji[2] still more angry, and he turned on me and abused me too, as well as the rest of the world.

'Sorry,' I said, 'memberji, but I can't help laughing at such an astounding statement.'

'Why ?' he said.

'Why, how can you expect the rest of the world to respect you when you don't respect yourselves ?' and I laughed again. 'Oh, you refer to the untouchables,' he said with sarcasm ; 'that's an old story and not half as important as you make out.' 'No,

[1] Common meeting place in village.

[2] 'Ji,' used alone or as an enclitic, signifying respect.

I don't refer to the untouchables,' I said, 'though they are bad enough and quite sufficient to make us all hang our heads in shame.' 'Then what do you refer to?' he said. 'Well,' I said, 'half the population is female, isn't it?' 'Yes,' he said, 'of course it is.' 'And all the men are born of women?' 'Yes,' he said, 'why ask such foolish questions?' 'Well, then,' I said, 'until you treat women with respect, and while you pay more respect to cattle than to women, how can you be said to be respecting yourselves, and how can you expect other people to respect you?' Memberji got so angry and abusive then, and started talking so loudly about ancient civilizations and so on, that I hurried away.

'We don't find it as easy to laugh as you seem to, Socrates,' said a young villager rather stiffly. 'Perhaps you'll explain a bit more?'

SOCRATES: Well, then, if a man kills a cow there will be a riot?

VILLAGERS: Yes, very likely.

SOCRATES: If a man treats his wife so badly that she commits suicide or dies or runs away, will there be a riot?

VILLAGERS: Certainly not; we shall sympathize with him and attend his wedding when he gets another wife.

SOCRATES: When your cow is going to calve whom do you call?

VILLAGERS: A sensible zamindar, of course.

SOCRATES: When your wife is going to have a baby whom do you send for?

VILLAGERS: The sweeper's wife, or the Chumār's.

SOCRATES: The lowest and dirtiest class of woman in the village?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And you reserve the darkest room and the dirtiest rags for this event?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And with all your boast of purdah and so on, you make no latrine arrangements for women and compel them to suffer agonies of discomfort waiting for night to come, so that they may prowl about outside the village, or else seek with shame some hiding place by day. They are liable to be disturbed both by day and by night, and have to shift about like frightened dogs.

VILLAGERS: That is correct, Socrates. You have discovered and shown up a very bad custom of ours.

SOCRATES: And that is why a bastard is called a 'gēt gātwār ka bacha?'[1]

VILLAGERS: That is probably so.

SOCRATES: And you make no attempt to bring up the girls properly or educate them?

VILLAGERS: Hardly any.

SOCRATES: When a girl is born you sympathize with the father?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: In fact, the girls have such a hard life in their infancy and childhood that more girls die than boys, though the doctors all say that girls are easier to keep alive than boys.

VILLAGERS: Yes, I am afraid we do neglect our girls.

SOCRATES: And you marry them in childhood, before they know anything about housekeeping, or domestic science, or how to bring up children or look after their husbands, and you force them to bear children while they should be still at school and developing their minds and bodies by learning and by playing.

VILLAGERS: All this is true, Socrates, of many of us, and some of it is true of all of us.

SOCRATES: And many of you lock your women up all their lives?

VILLAGERS: Yes, some of us observe purdah.

SOCRATES: And many who do not observe purdah lock up their womenfolk as soon as they get a little money or a little education?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is the custom, too.

SOCRATES: And the women do all the drudgery as well as bringing up the children, and the men sit by and smoke?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is largely true, too.

SOCRATES: And if your wife only bears you daughters you blame her and are unkind to her, and finally replace her by another woman?

VILLAGERS: That is often true, too.

SOCRATES: And it is the women who have to nurse the sick?

[1] A child of the farmyard.

and ailing children and see them die, all because of the filth and squalor you live in and the ignorance of the women as to how to bring up children and how to avoid simple diseases like smallpox, etc. ?

VILLAGERS : Yes, Socrates, we plead guilty.

SOCRATES : And if you roused yourselves and improved your conditions of life, half the disease would disappear ?

VILLAGERS : Yes, we believe it would.

SOCRATES : And if you educated your girls, and did not marry them till they were educated and fully grown up, they would know how to bring up children and would avoid all the usual ailments that kill your children, and would be saved all the sorrow and trouble of tending sick children and seeing them die one after the other.

VILLAGERS : Your charges are only too true, old man.

SOCRATES : Would a woman who knew the value of vaccination hide her baby when the vaccinator came ?

VILLAGERS : Never ; the mother loves her baby far more than the father, and would never allow it to have smallpox if she really understood the value of vaccination.

SOCRATES : Then when I said you do not respect your women and you reverence them less than you do your cattle, I am not far from the truth ?

VILLAGERS : We fear you are absolutely true, Socrates.

SOCRATES : And mark my words, O zamindars. As soon as you treat your women as the equals of men, honour and reverence them, bring them up properly and regard them as the equal partners of your homes and hearths, and not as God-given drudges to be knocked about, bullied and treated as slaves, so soon will you have bright, healthy homes, and so soon will you receive the respect of the whole world.

ADVISING THE MOTHERS

A Health Visitor, or District Nurse, advising mothers at the Health Centre

GOOD TRADITIONS AND THE SCHOOLMASTER'S IDEAL

VILLAGER: Socrates, you are trying to turn my village upside down and change everything.

SOCRATES: No, I am not, O zamindar, but when I see obvious evils and cruelties they make my blood hot and I must speak out.

VILLAGER: But you are forever complaining and chiding.

SOCRATES: Yes, I do complain a lot, but then I see a lot of evil.

VILLAGER: Don't you ever see any good?

SOCRATES: Yes, plenty of good, but there is no need to talk about the good. It is good and it is going on, and I am very pleased to see it. After all, the doctor is a stranger to the strong and healthy; his work is with the diseased and weak.

VILLAGER: Yes, but if you don't occasionally keep an eye on the healthy and strong, perhaps they will become ill one day.

SOCRATES: Yes, I admit that too, and it reminds me that you people are beginning to forget and are dropping your good customs and sticking only to the bad ones. You are quick enough, too, to pick up a bad custom, but very slow to pick up a good one. You took to smoking cigarettes like a duck takes to water, but what a job we had to make you dig pits for your refuse!

VILLAGER: Yes, good habits are difficult both to introduce and to stick to. Evil habits come almost instinctively, and the old good habits we are dropping very rapidly.

SOCRATES: Yes; in the old days the villager was abstemious and virtuous, but I think, with motors and trains and education, he is beginning to lose his old virtues and not only keep his old vices, but find a lot of new ones.

Just then the schoolmaster came up.

SOCRATES: Now, masterji, this is your job.

SCHOOLMASTER: What is this, O Socrates? I am hard-worked enough already with my monthly returns and all the new things I am expected to know and teach.

SOCRATES: Masterji, you are the custodian of the good old customs.

SCHOOLMASTER: Yet another job for me. Shall I be paid an allowance for this?

SOCRATES: No, masterji; but in your hands lies the future of the village. As you mould the character of these little boys and girls—quite a number of girls are now attending your village school, I am glad to see—so will be the future character of your village.

SCHOOLMASTER: My job is to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, with history and geography.

SOCRATES: Bother history and geography, masterji; your job is to educate, to train the character as well as to teach the brain.

SCHOOLMASTER: How can I, Socrates, with all I have to do?

SOCRATES: You are a good man yourself, and you believe in preserving the good old customs and in weeding out the bad ones?

SCHOOLMASTER: Yes, I hope so.

SOCRATES: And you don't want your boys to pick up new bad customs, do you?

SCHOOLMASTER: I hope not.

SOCRATES: Well, by your character and your own actions, and by a little said here and said there, and by your attitude in always supporting the good and opposing the bad, you have to set a good example to your pupils and lead them into good ways.

SCHOOLMASTER: I can do that, Socrates, of course.

SOCRATES: Well, do it. It takes no time and costs nothing. You are a lamp of culture shining in the darkness of your village, and you have got to keep your lamp bright.

SCHOOLMASTER: That is a great ideal for a poor village schoolmaster, but I will do my best.

SOCRATES: And your village will bless you in the days to come. These children are entrusted to you, and see that you fail not. Set an example of good. That reminds me. Yesterday, when I passed your school, I saw a lot of both boys and girls wearing jewellery, and their hands and faces were so dirty I could hardly believe they had ever been washed since they were born. Why, some of the girls had so many wires and things in their ears that I thought they'd got some sort of machine there.

SCHOOLMASTER: Yes, they always come like that.

SOCRATES: But isn't it very silly putting jewellery on children, wasting money in this way, instead of spending it on soap and quinine, mosquito nets, and so on?

SCHOOLMASTER: Yes, it is very silly.

SOCRATES: Then what is the use of teaching them to read and write when they are in this condition?

SCHOOLMASTER: Well, they come to school to learn, and it is my job to teach them. These other things are none of my concern.

SOCRATES: Your job is to educate, and what is education without health and cleanliness?

SCHOOLMASTER: It is not much good, I agree, but they are not my job.

SOCRATES: Then whose is it?

SCHOOLMASTER: I don't know; not mine, anyway. Perhaps it's the parents' job.

SOCRATES: Yes, certainly; but they were only brought up as you propose to bring up these children. So they don't know. Who is to make a beginning, masterji?

SCHOOLMASTER: I don't know; it's not down in any of my school textbooks.

SOCRATES: Perhaps those books were written by people who didn't know village life and ways.

SCHOOLMASTER: Very likely, indeed.

SOCRATES: Well, what is the object of your school education?

SCHOOLMASTER: To teach reading and writing, etc.

SOCRATES: And what is the object of reading and writing?

SCHOOLMASTER: I don't know; to make them able to read and write, I suppose.

SOCRATES: But there must be some final object of it all?

SCHOOLMASTER: I can't see any, unless it is to enable them to earn their living.

SOCRATES: But if they learn to waste their money on jewellery, where will their living be? And if they live in dirt, most of them will die of disease before they grow up.

SCHOOLMASTER: You confuse me, Socrates, with all your questions and theories.

SOCRATES: Well, I suggest that the object of education is to make the boys and girls better, and better able to live good, healthy, happy lives. They learn to read to enable them to learn how to improve their homes and farms.

SCHOOLMASTER: Yes, that must be the real object of education in the end, I suppose.

SOCRATES: Then surely the first lesson at school is not ABC, but to wash face and eyes and hands; and not to wear jewellery, but to use quinine and mosquito nets instead.

SCHOOLMASTER: These are excellent lessons, certainly.

SOCRATES: Can you think of any better?

SCHOOLMASTER: No, certainly not.

SOCRATES: Then why not teach them?

SCHOOLMASTER: Then I shall fail to pass them through the classes and lose my promotion.

SOCRATES: No, you won't, masterji. This is practical education, and your boys and girls will never let you down if you teach them in this way. Their intelligence and keenness will increase so much that they will pass all the more quickly, and you will be doing at last some real genuine education, preparing the children for the great battle of life when they grow up.

Just then a mother was heard scolding her child and using language which made Socrates jump with horror. No one else took any notice.

SOCRATES: There's a horrible custom.

SCHOOLMASTER: What? I noticed nothing.

SOCRATES: Didn't you hear that filthy language?

SCHOOLMASTER: Oh, that's nothing. I use that to my pupils as terms of affection, and everyone uses it, both to children and to cattle. No one means any harm by it.

SOCRATES: But do you really think it is right to use these filthy words?

SCHOOLMASTER: No, I suppose I don't; but we mean nothing by it, and no one minds and it does no harm, I dare say.

SOCRATES: Of course it does harm; and you know it perfectly well, masterji.

SCHOOLMASTER: Well, I suppose it does when you come to think of it.

SOCRATES: Then stop it, and teach your pupils to abhor filthy

language. How can you ever command respect, and how can your children ever respect their sisters and mothers, when you all use such disgusting words?

SCHOOLMASTER: You are very particular, Socrates, but you are really right. This habit of using filthy language is most deplorable.

SOCRATES: Then set yourself to kill it, at any rate in your village. Why, when I was a boy, when I said anything dirty, my mother took soap and a brush and scrubbed my tongue to clean it. I can tell you I soon learnt to avoid using nasty words!

SCHOOLMASTER: I think if we used that method here we should soon scrub away the whole of the tongues, not only of our children but of ourselves too.

SOCRATES: Well, make a beginning, anyway. It is wonderful what power you schoolmasters have if you will only use it aright.

THE VILLAGE LEADER

LAMBARDAR :[1] Socrates Sahib, I have tired myself out explaining to the people how to improve their life, but no one obeys.

SOCRATES : I think I shall have to write a song, the refrain of which is, 'Bahutēra samjhāya, koi nahin mānta'.[2] I hear it wherever I go, lambardarji.

LAMBARDAR : It is very true, O Socrates. Our lot is very hard these difficult times ; no one obeys our orders.

SOCRATES : Why is it, lambardarji ? Have you no rob,[3] no izzat ? Do you command no respect ?

LAMBARDAR : I have plenty of both, Socrates, but I don't know what it is ; no one obeys us nowadays.

SOCRATES : Surely when they see the great difference these improvements make to your own health and wealth and happiness, they hasten to follow such an excellent example ?

LAMBARDAR : What do you mean, Socrates ?

SOCRATES : What I say, of course ! When they see the advantages of your Persian wheel,[4] surely they put them up themselves ?

LAMBARDAR : I have no Persian wheel, Socrates.

SOCRATES : But you have been urging the people to put them up for years, haven't you ?

LAMBARDAR : Yes, for years, day and night, but no one has obeyed. Bahutēra samjhāya, koi nahin mānta.

SOCRATES : Lambardarji, they say that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of preaching. Whenever you make yourself hoarse by preaching, they laugh and say, 'If the thing was as good as he says it is, he would surely have done it himself ; so let us wait until he puts up a wheel himself, and then we will follow his example'.

LAMBARDAR : I never thought of that, Socrates. I thought my duty was merely to tell the people to obey what I say.

[1] Village headman ; a hereditary officer, appointed by Government.

[2] I talk all day and nobody minds.

[3] Standing. [4] A water-lifting machine.

CAMEL WORKING A PERSIAN WHEEL

SOCRATES: In fact, your tongue supports uplift, but your heart is still devoted to your dirty old ways.

LAMBARDAR: Oh no, Socrates, hardly that.

SOCRATES: Then when you tell the people to abandon the dog-like habit of easing themselves everywhere in and outside the village, are you still following the customs of the dog yourself, and are also your wife and children, or have you set an example of cleanliness and self-respect?

LAMBARDAR: I am afraid not, Socrates; I do as other people.

SOCRATES: Then your heart is not with us, lambardarji?

LAMBARDAR: I suppose it is not.

SOCRATES: And you are not a leader, but a follower. You bark like a dog behind the heels of progressive people, but do nothing yourself to help; you wait for other people to go in front and try the new improvements, and then if they are successful you will try them too. What a miserable position for a lambardar, or for anyone who considers he has any position or is a big man in the village! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Don't you despise yourself?

LAMBARDAR: You do make me ashamed, Socrates, but it is very hard to stand alone against the laughter and jeers of the village.

SOCRATES: Someone must go first, lambardarji, or there will never be any progress at all.

LAMBARDAR: That it very true.

SOCRATES: Then who better to go first than you, the acknowledged leader of the village? You can afford to try new things, as you are a man of some wealth. Even if they are not successful at first, you do not mind; you will not be ruined. These little men cannot afford experiments. They must wait till the big men have worked them out, and then copy them if they are good. As a matter of fact, none of the new things advertised in our district have failed. They are all thoroughly tried out first, and only when successful are they advertised in the District Gazette and in posters, songs and dramas.

LAMBARDAR: I see your meaning, Socrates; I am a leader and I must lead. I will try.

SOCRATES: And you, Subedar[1] and Risaldar[2] Sahib, you slap

[1] Senior Indian commissioned infantry officer. [2] Cavalry ditto.

your chests and show your medals, and say how bravely you led your comrades in France and Mesopotamia; why can't you lead your village at home as well?

SUBEDAR: It takes a braver man, Socrates, to lead his village away from old and bad customs than to lead a company into battle.

SOCRATES: There you are quite right, but why not earn more laurels, Subedar Sahib, by leading your village to uplift and enlightenment at home?

SUBEDAR: I will try, old man; but I came home to rest and not to start another war — the war against dirt, squalor and disease and degradation and poverty.

SOCRATES: Well, have a try. The reward is certain, and there are no casualties. Laughter does not kill like bullets. You will soon be immune against ridicule, and the more they laugh at you the more will you set your teeth and fight for the uplift of your village.

SUBEDAR: We will join you in your holy war, Socrates.

SOCRATES: It's a war where we are bound to win, and every victory adds strength to our army. Every man won over, every family persuaded to do as we say and as we do (remember that it is a war of action, not of words), is an ally, an advertisement, so we are bound to win in the end.

SUBEDAR and LAMBARDAR: We believe you are right. Taraqqi ki jai![1]

[1] Hurrah for progress!

A HOLY WAR

SOCRATES went to the chaupāl, as usual, and found it full of ex-officers and ex-soldiers, all smartly got up with uniform and medals, and looking very proud and gay.

SOCRATES: Good morning, gentlemen, how smart you all are to-day. Do you know what you remind me of most?

EX-OFFICERS: What, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Peacocks sitting on a muck heap.

EX-OFFICERS: You are pretty rude this morning, Socrates; why are you pleased to make such an insulting comparison, old man?

SOCRATES: Well, you are beautifully dressed and covered with medals, but your village is filthy.

EX-OFFICERS: That is unfortunately true, but anyway you will admit that even your own comparison shows that what you describe is natural.

SOCRATES: Oh, is it? Did the peacocks make the muck heap?

EX-OFFICERS: No.

SOCRATES: And aren't you all responsible for the dirty state of your village?

EX-OFFICERS: We suppose we are, to some extent.

SOCRATES: Anyway, what is happening—is it a wedding or a garden party, or what?

SUBEDAR-MAJOR:[1] Hardly a garden party here, Socrates! We don't keep gardens in villages.

SOCRATES: Then where do your wives take their little babies for air and exercise in the afternoon?

SUBEDAR-MAJOR: Nowhere, of course. What an idea!

SOCRATES: But surely a Subedar-Major's wife is as smart and clean and enlightened as a Subedar-Major? Surely she doesn't live in darkness and squalor, the same as the rest of the village?

SUBEDAR-MAJOR: She lives in just the same way as all the rest of the village women.

[1] The senior Indian commissioned officer of an infantry battalion.

Socrates: Then all the training and uplift of army life was wasted on you, Subedar-Major Sahib, if you are content to drop back into the old ways, shed your enlightenment with your uniform, and forget all you ever learnt?

Subedar-Major: What would you have us do, Socrates? You've always got some strange new fashions for us.

Socrates: Why, I should expect you ex-officers to bring back with you a little light and culture into the villages, to make your houses models of comfort and hygiene, and make gardens for your wives and children to enjoy.

Subedar-Major: That sounds attractive, Socrates, and we have the means, but we seem unable to combine and no one will take the lead.

Socrates: The old story, I fear. We can always combine for evil, and there are always leaders to come forward to lead us to mischief, but we can never combine for good, and no leaders will ever come forward to set an example in good things.

Subedar-Major: That is so, Socrates, and always has been.

Socrates: Then we must try and alter it. Let's make a start by starting a sort of ex-officers' club in our village, put together a little money, and make a small garden for the women and children to sit in; and let us find out and practise all the various ways there are of improving village life. We are not poor, and many of the new things will bring in money too, such as good seed, iron ploughs, Persian wheels, and so on. The other things that reduce dirt and disease will cost nothing, and, by saving the time now wasted in bed with fever, we may save money too. Anyway, let's have a try.

Subedar-Major: Very well, Socrates; we will make a start and see if we cannot lead the village in peace as we led our braves in war.

PUBLIC SERVANTS

SOCRATES came into the village and found the patwari[1] and the kanungo[2] and the zaildar and sufedposh[3] sitting with the lambardars, discussing the new jamabandi[4] which was being prepared. Socrates was in a very angry mood, as the village had not been cleaned for days and there were heaps of dung-cakes about and dogs barking and all the evil things which irritated the old man so much every time he saw them.

'Good morning,' said Socrates, but no one answered him. 'Good morning,' he said still louder.

'Silence!' said the patwari. 'Can't you see the hākims[5] are taking counsel together? Who are you, old man, to interfere with your croaking?'

SOCRATES: What hākims, O young and mannerless babu?[6]

PATWARI: Be careful, old man, or your tongue will lead you into trouble. Am I not a public servant, a patwari, third grade, confirmed these six months, and are not these gentlemen also public servants?

SOCRATES: Pardon me, O mighty one, but you first said you were hākims; now you say you are public servants.

PATWARI: Yes, of course; we are all hākims.

SOCRATES: But how can a servant be a hākim?

PATWARI: Of course he can. Are we not Government servants, and thereby also hākims?

SOCRATES: But the duty of a servant is to serve his masters. How can he also be a hākim?

PATWARI: We are Government servants, and therefore hākims. Be careful how you insult us.

SOCRATES: I will be very careful; but, pardon my curiosity, as a servant whom do you serve, please?

PATWARI: Government, of course, O stupid old man.

[1] Village revenue accountant and field-mapper. [2] His superior officer.
[3] A leading squire, but of a lower grade than a zaildar.
[4] Village land record or domesday book. [5] Rulers. [6] Clerk.

SOCRATES: But what is this Government? Is it a man or a thing or what? How does it exist?

KANUNGO: Let me deal with him, patwariji. You go on working out the land revenue bach.[1] Understand, old man, that Government is a great institution for the organization of the country, and exists by the taxes and land revenue which it raises.

SOCRATES: Thank you, kanungoji. Then who pays these taxes and land revenue?

KANUNGO: Why, the zamindars and shopkeepers, of course.

SOCRATES: Then they own this great Government if they pay for it?

KANUNGO: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: Then this great Government must exist for their benefit?

KANUNGO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And all these Government servants the honourable patwari mentioned are the servants of this Government?

KANUNGO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then if the Government belongs to the people who pay taxes, those servants belong to the people too?

KANUNGO: Yes, that must be so.

SOCRATES: Well, as they all pay land revenue in this village, all these Government servants exist for the benefit of this village then?

KANUNGO: Why, yes, I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Then all this high talk of hākims is quite wrong. Your patwari and all of you are the servants of the public and of the people of this village too?

KANUNGO: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Then would it not be better to teach this patwari, before he gets any older, to curb his tongue and remember he is the servant, and not the tyrant, of the villagers?

KANUNGO: I will indeed, Socratesji.

SOCRATES: All you public servants are educated, are you not?

KANUNGO: Yes; why, how could we do our work if we weren't?

SOCRATES: Then you have all read the posters and notices

[1] Distribution of the land revenue demand over the holding of land.

issued about pits and cleanliness and education and vaccination and uplift, and you read the District Gazette, don't you?

KANUNGO: I have seen these things, I believe.

SOCRATES: And you have heard the Deputy Commissioner[1] lecture and explain exactly what ought to be done to put things right in the villages?

KANUNGO, PATWARI, ZAILDAR and SUFEDPOSH (*all together*): Have we not heard it; and heard it till we're sick of it? Such stuff you never heard! What's it all got to do with us, I should like to know! Why, even the tahsildar[2] is sometimes infected with the same madness and tries to make our lives a burden. But I am glad we have so far escaped.

SOCRATES (*aside*): If you call this madness, I wish the Deputy Commissioner would bite all of you. (*Aloud and very angrily*) Well, I call you all 'namak harām'.[3]

KANUNGO: Be careful, Socrates; these words are too hard. We don't mind humouring an old man for a bit, but you are going too far now and will repent it.

SOCRATES: Why, O hākim—pardon me—O public servant? You know all about this work, and know that all this work is good and will improve the people, and yet you despise it and laugh at those who try to carry it out, and refuse to help.

KANUNGO: It is no duty of ours.

SOCRATES: But you just said you were public servants, the servants of those very villagers who are dying of dirt and disease, and living in squalor and degradation and in wholly unnecessary poverty and suffering.

KANUNGO: We have our duties, and these are not among them.

SOCRATES: But you are paid by the taxes these people pay, you use the schools, roads and hospitals these people pay for, and yet you recognize no responsibility to help and to improve the conditions in which they live.

KANUNGO: We have plenty of other duties, and this has never been one of them.

SOCRATES: No wonder the villages are in this awful condi-

[1] The head official of the district.
[2] A sub-collector of revenue.
[3] Absolutely faithless to your salt.

tion; when you educated people—the only ones with the knowledge of what should be done—refuse to recognize any duty of service to your people. If a boy or a cow or even a woman—excuse my putting the woman last and least important, but I speak from experience—falls into a well, do you say, 'I have many other duties and it is not one of them to cry for help and pull them out'?

KANUNGO: Don't be foolish, Socrates! This is a matter of common sense and common decency. I should shout for help, pull off my pagri[1] and make a rope to pull them out.

SOCRATES: But you *might* lose an hour of time and spoil your pagri.

KANUNGO: It would be my plain duty to help, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And if a house caught fire?

KANUNGO: I should do all I could, even though I spoilt my clothes.

SOCRATES: The same sense of duty?

KANUNGO: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And yet when the children are losing their sight and their health and their beauty and their lives by dirt, disease and ignorance, and when the villagers are losing half their crops by ignorance of what to do and how to farm properly, it is no part of your duty to tell them what they *should* do?

KANUNGO: Hitherto I have never looked at it like this, but you make me doubt much in my mind whether, after all, you are not right and we public servants are not, after all, faithless to our salt.

SOCRATES: Surely it makes little difference whether a child dies of drowning in a well or of smallpox or dysentery, except that the drowning is less painful and others will not catch it as well.

KANUNGO: You are right, Socrates. You have given me an entirely new idea of our duties. I will act on what you say, and I hope you will find me and my patwaris your strongest allies. And you too, zaildar and sufedposh, bear this all in mind. We have great influence and great opportunities; see that you use them properly and try and uplift your people, instead of living on them like locusts. Good-bye, Socrates, and thank you for a hard but excellent lesson, which I shall never forget.

When these officials had gone, an ex-officer, who had been sitting by, said, 'Shābāsh,[1] Socrates, they are regular tyrants—, those people; I'm glad you put them right'.

SOCRATES (*very angry*): And what are you, you ex-officers and ex-soldiers? You are almost worse. You learnt everything in the army about sanitation and hygiene and cleanliness and avoiding disease; you saw many countries and conversed with great and well-educated officers, and they taught you most carefully and treated you like their own children. Now you come home on pensions paid for by the villagers, and instead of setting them an example of uplift and of good housing, good farming, avoiding disease; instead of teaching them to honour their women-folk, educate their girls and boys, you drop back into the same old squalor as they are in, you shed your culture with your uniform, and you are just a lot of idlers who know better but are too lazy to act on your knowledge. Bah!

EX-OFFICER: Socrates, I am afraid there is a lot of truth in what you say, but anyway we are not tyrants like them.

SOCRATES (*still very angry*): No, not tyrants perhaps, but you are certainly ticks, feeding at the expense of someone else and doing them no good. Now wake up, ex-officers and ex-soldiers, and put the good lessons you learnt in the army into practice and make your homes and villages clean, orderly and healthy.

EX-OFFICER: Your tongue is bitter to-day, but we will try and help in this great work.

SOCRATES: I am glad to hear it; and forgive my tongue, Subedar Sahib. I mean well, though sometimes I get very angry with you all and despair of your ever improving. I was in the army myself once, and the soldier is always my best friend.

[1] Well done!

THE ASCENT OF MAN

SOCRATES: I have been thinking long over your village life, O elders, and I really do not think you are very much superior in your ways and methods to the wild animals, who you boast are your inferiors.

VILLAGERS: You are very aggressive this afternoon, old man. Why do you condemn us wholesale?

SOCRATES: Well, as I was coming along in the early morning, I found many people easing themselves in the fields and by the village paths, in no way different from the animals—no attempt at privacy, no attempt at cleanliness. Why, the animals are often cleaner than you in this respect!

VILLAGERS: Well, we all must do it somewhere and some time, Socrates. We admit our ways are crude and the smell is obnoxious, but we are used to it all and don't notice it now. Anyway, what do you suggest we should do?

SOCRATES: Well, there are your village pits, aren't there? You all dig pits for refuse nowadays, don't you?

VILLAGERS: Yes; we owe that to you, Socrates, and our villages have been infinitely cleaner ever since, our children have been healthier and their eyes better, fewer flies, less dust, and double the crops. Yes, indeed, our pits are a great source of profit to us.

SOCRATES: Well, use those pits as latrines. Put walls or screens round and two planks across, and you have a first-class latrine. Reserve some for men, some for women, all round the village, and you will have still more manure, no smell, and no one will be able to accuse you of being no better than animals. The daily refuse and cattle dung and ashes will cover up the night soil and stop all smell and flies, and your health will again improve, as at present flies sit on this filth and then sit on your food and on your children's eyes.

VILLAGERS: We will try it for our women, and perhaps later on for ourselves.

SOCRATES: But that isn't all, O villagers. You are like animals in many other ways.

VILLAGERS: For instance?

SOCRATES: Well, your houses are dark and have no windows —just like a rat-hole or a porcupine's earth.

VILLAGERS: Well, yes; but some of us have started putting in windows, Socrates. We don't all disregard your constant complaints.

SOCRATES: Then your marriages are just like the mating of birds—recorded nowhere.

VILLAGERS: There you are wrong, Socrates. Since you last came we have introduced marriage registers, and we hope soon to move Government to make registration compulsory, as it has reduced litigation and trouble considerably, and everyone now agrees that it should be universal and compulsory.

SOCRATES: Excellent. Then you are rapidly rising superior to the animal creation.

VILLAGERS: Of course we are; but you forget many things, Socrates. What about our books, our great buildings, our railways, our sewing machines and bicycles?

SOCRATES: Can you write?

VILLAGER: No, I cannot.

SOCRATES: Can you build a masonry house?

VILLAGER: No, I am not a mason.

SOCRATES: Can you make a bicycle or a sewing machine or even a cart?

VILLAGERS: No, we are not khātis,[1] or lohārs[2] or mistris.[3]

SOCRATES: Can you make a railway?

VILLAGERS: No, we are not engineers. We are zamindars, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then in all these things you differ in nothing from the animals, as you can make none of them?

VILLAGERS: No, but we can use them.

SOCRATES: Yes; a rat can sit in a railway train, but that does not make him human. Besides, if your bicycle or sewing machine goes out of order, you have no idea of putting it right.

VILLAGERS: Well, anyway, we are very superior to the animals, Socrates.

[1] Carpenter caste. [2] Iron-working caste. [3] Mechanic.

SOCRATES: Superior—no! Different—yes; and I'll tell you how. First, your children are dirty and you never wash them, and your homes are dirty. Animals keep their children beautifully clean, and homes too. So, too, animals are not diseased and their children's eyes are not bad like yours and your children's. Animals do not neglect their female children like you do. They treat all alike. Animals do not lock up their females as you lock up your womenfolk and keep them in bad health and discomfort. Animals do not run away with each other's wives like you do. Animals do not go to law against each other, nor do they foul their drinking water like you foul your well-water.

VILLAGERS: Stop, stop! You are shaming us intolerably, O Socrates, to-day.

SOCRATES: Well, am I speaking the truth or lying?

VILLAGERS: The truth, Socrates; but it is none the less hard to hear.

SOCRATES: Would you have me speak comfortable lies?

VILLAGERS: No; that would not help either, Socrates. We have heard them for hundreds of years, but go a bit slowly, Socrates—one thing at a time—and we will follow out all you say. Our brothers and our wives have to be persuaded as well as ourselves, and it takes a long time to get each new thing accepted.

SOCRATES: That I can well understand, but some days I feel impatient and think that you will never be any better.

VILLAGERS: We are already better, Socrates, and no one knows it better than you do.

SOCRATES: Yes, I see changes. The manure pits, and the marriage registers, and some windows, and the reduction of jewellery, and many other improvements I see.

VILLAGERS: Thank you, Socrates; you are encouraging us greatly.

SOCRATES: Yes (*with a sly smile as he disappeared round the corner on his way home*). In one thing you are vastly ahead of the animal creation, and I must mention it before I go. The animals can neither drink alcohol nor smoke a hookah. Farewell!

MEN AND ANIMALS

SOCRATES came to the village chaupāl and found the village elders, as usual, sitting round the hookah talking.

SOCRATES: I have a desire to come and live with you in your village, and watch your daily life and study it.

The elders nodded their heads and muttered with alarm, almost with anger. At last one old man said, 'Socrates, much as we respect you and admire your age and your learning, this will be impossible.'

SOCRATES: Oh, dear, I have offended again; and again quite unwittingly. Why, O elders, cannot I live with you and study your domestic life?

VILLAGERS: Well, Socrates, please don't be offended, but it's quite impossible. We are family men and this cannot be.

SOCRATES: Why, O village elders?

VILLAGERS: No, it's impossible.

SOCRATES: Why, indeed?

VILLAGERS: Well, it's this way, if you must know, Socrates. We observe purdah, and if you live in the village our women will be unable to move about and do their daily work for fear of being seen by you.

SOCRATES (*laughing heartily*): Splendid! What an idea! Why, I'm a family man myself and sixty years old. Who'll be afraid of me?

VILLAGERS (*getting rather annoyed*): Well, anyway, it's our custom and you can't live in our village.

SOCRATES: Then I'll live just outside, and come in whenever I am allowed to.

VILLAGERS (*rather ashamed*): I'm afraid that will be difficult too, O Socrates.

SOCRATES: What is the matter? Do your cattle keep purdah too? Why can't I live there?

VILLAGERS: No, it's not that, but it will be difficult.

SOCRATES: Well, you are secretive. Do tell me. I don't

want to offend you, but I do want to live as near to you as I may.

VILLAGERS: Certainly, Socrates; we recognize you as our true friend, but the trouble is that all round our village are heaps of muck and we all ease ourselves there, and it will be impossible for you to live there. You are so particular about things being clean that you would not like it at all. Besides, our women go there too.

SOCRATES: What! You just said you observed purdah.

VILLAGERS: Yes, certainly we do.

SOCRATES: That's a queer kind of purdah. At their homes they are in purdah, and yet you don't mind them easing themselves in public. You are funny people, indeed.

VILLAGERS: They go at night.

SOCRATES: Worse still. No wonder the phrase for an illegitimate child is 'gēt gatwār ka bacha'. Besides, supposing they are ill and compelled to go by day?

VILLAGERS: They try to arrange to wait till evening.

SOCRATES: What discomfort, what agony, and how terribly bad for their health! Now would you men like to be tortured in this way?

VILLAGERS: We go when and where we like.

SOCRATES: How utterly cruel you are to your women!

VILLAGERS: Oh, well, they can go and squat in the crops.

SOCRATES: Crops don't grow all the year round near the village.

VILLAGERS: Then there are bushes and such-like things.

SOCRATES: Yes, but there is no privacy there, as everyone is doing the same thing, and there are not many bushes, and the bushes only give purdah from one direction. If anyone comes while they are busy they have to jump up and move away. How utterly disgusting!

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is all true.

SOCRATES: Then you are not only utterly cruel, but compel your women to be utterly shameless, and that though you boast of being a purdah-observing, high-caste tribe. I call your customs cruel and filthy and shameless and utterly degrading for your women.

VILLAGERS: Well, what do you suggest as a remedy?

SOCRATES: That's perfectly simple. You've dug pits for your manure and rubbish?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then put screens or walls (walls are better, as they do not harbour flies) round them, two planks across them, and you have a perfect latrine. Reserve some for women, some for men, all round the village, and your women will be able to go in comfort and safety by day or by night. They and you will visit these pit latrines in the early morning, and then during the day ashes, rubbish, dung, etc., will be thrown on top as the houses and village are cleaned, and there will be no smell, no flies and an extra supply of manure for your fields.

VILLAGERS: We will do it; and thank you for showing us a very real evil in our life; but time and custom have so blunted our sensibilities that we have ceased to notice it. Thank you again, Socrates.

THREE MASTERS

SOCRATES: Good morning, brothers.

VILLAGERS: Good morning, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Your village seems to be full of dirt and smells this morning; it made me feel quite ill as I came along.

VILLAGERS: Yes, confound it! The sweepers are away at a wedding and the place is filthy.

SOCRATES: What a pity! But I thought this village belonged to Jats and Rajputs, not to sweepers. I thought you, and not the sweepers, were the owners.

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course we are. What makes you think the sweepers are our masters and own this village?

SOCRATES: Well, if it doesn't rain there'll be no crops and and you'll all die of hunger?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: God sends the rain?

VILLAGERS: Yes; why?

SOCRATES: Therefore you say God is your master.

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course He is (may His blessing be on us!).

SOCRATES: Well, and if Government did not provide soldiers and police and law courts and roads and all these things, all would be chaos, wouldn't it?

VILLAGERS: Certainly it would. Thieves would loot us at night, we should be unable to travel, should have no post offices and no canal water.

SOCRATES: And you consider Government your master too?

VILLAGERS: Yes, Government is our master too.

SOCRATES: And I say the sweeper is your master too.

VILLAGERS: Certainly not! God forbid you should say any such thing, O Socrates!

SOCRATES: Well, if the sweeper doesn't clean the village you will all die of dirt, your children will get diarrhœa and dysentery, their eyes will get bad, and altogether the village will soon be uninhabitable—it's pretty bad already too!

VILLAGERS: Yes, we are afraid that's only too true, Socrates. Our village is rarely clean nowadays; the sweepers and their wives care nothing and we cannot make them work.

SOCRATES: Then the sweeper is your master after all?

VILLAGERS: Sir, it seems so at last.

SOCRATES: Then you have three masters—God, Government and the sweeper.

VILLAGERS: Spare us, O Socrates! Your logic is too hard to meet.

SOCRATES: And the sweeper is the most important of the three too, as, if he doesn't favour you, in ten days the village will be hardly fit for pigs to live in.

VILLAGERS: That also is true, O Socrates.

SOCRATES: These sweepers now—I suppose all countries have them? England is beautifully clean; the sweepers there must be very efficient and docile.

FIRST EX-SOLDIER VILLAGER: No, sir; I was in England, there are no sweepers there.

SECOND EX-SOLDIER VILLAGER: I saw none in Palestine or Salonika either.

THIRD EX-SOLDIER VILLAGER: Nor saw I any in Mesopotamia or Africa.

SOCRATES: Then it seems India is the only place that has sweepers?

VILLAGERS: That is so, we believe. We have never heard of them anywhere else.

SOCRATES: Then India must be the cleanest place in the world?

EX-SOLDIER VILLAGERS (*all together*): No, indeed; England is cleaner, France is cleaner; in fact, we don't remember seeing any villages as dirty as ours in any country we visited.

SOCRATES: Then this country, that has special arrangements for cleaning itself, so far from being the cleanest country in the world, must be counted one of the dirtiest?

VILLAGERS: We are afraid this is so, Socrates, but we cannot say why.

SOCRATES: Then perhaps I can. The person who does a thing best is the person most interested in it's being done. The more cleanliness the more manure for your fields. The more

cleanliness the healthier your children. Who is interested in your crops and your children's health, you or the sweeper?

VILLAGERS: We, of course, O Socrates. Who else could be?

SOCRATES: The only way, then, to clean the village is to clean it yourselves.

VILLAGERS: Socrates, how can you suggest such a thing? We Rajputs, we Jats, handle filth! impossible! absurd! Shame upon you, old man, for thinking of it!

SOCRATES: Pardon me, villagers. I am not well acquainted with the peculiar rules of you high-caste gentry, but I usually do not make such silly mistakes as this. But as I came along, the wind blew—or was it the cattle moving out of the village?—and the air was full of dust and it went into my lungs. Perhaps that confused me and made me foolish.

VILLAGERS: Yes, the dust is rather a bother. We are sorry to have been so angry, O Socrates, to such a venerable old man, but you must realize that what you said was most insulting.

SOCRATES: I am sorry and will be careful not to repeat such a suggestion. May I ask a little question? That dust that flies about when the wind blows, or any man or any animal moves, that comes from the heaps of muck, doesn't it?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course our village is surrounded with these heaps, and always has been.

SOCRATES: And the mound on which the village stands is made of the muck heaps of former generations?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And this dust from the muck heaps fills the air you breathe and goes into the food and into the water in the pots and in the wells, and into the ponds when it rains, whence comes the water for washing and for the milch cattle to drink, and so on?

VILLAGERS: Yes, why not? This has always happened. Why are you so inquisitive to-day, Socrates, about our old customs and ways of living?

SOCRATES: Pardon me, villagers, but this dust that you eat with your food, drink with your water, and take in with every breath you breathe is nothing more than finely-ground filth.

VILLAGERS: Yes, I suppose that may be true in a sense.

SOCRATES: Then a high-caste man may eat filth, drink filth,

breathe filth (in fact, it is not only the spice for his food, but the sherbet for his drink!); but when I suggest he should clean his village himself, so that his own food, water and air, and the food, water and air of his children may be pure and clean, he flies into a rage and is ready to abuse me. It is the divine right of the high castes to dirty the world, and never mind who cleans it! The rules of your caste are truly complicated, O villagers!

VILLAGERS: Pardon us, Socrates. You have caught us this time! We are sorry for being so rude just now, but what can we do? Custom is strong. We were brought up dirty, and it is easier to bring up our children as we were brought up than to fight all our old customs and clean our villages ourselves in order to have healthy homes and children.

SOCRATES: I agree; the road of uplift is steep and narrow, but at least teach your children, so that they may see the light, and not follow you into the old dirty ways of past ages.

VILLAGERS: Yes, we will; but how?

SOCRATES: The Boy Scouts teach every boy to be clean and to live in a clean home and to do all his cleaning himself, and not rely on sweepers or anyone else. Their principles are self-help and the service of society. Encourage your boys to join the Baden-Powell Boy Scouts and learn self-respect and cleanliness while they are young.

TRAINING

SOCRATES: How are you to-day, lambardarji?

LAMBARDAR: Very well, thank you; and you?

SOCRATES: So, so. I am an old man, you know, and alone. By the way, where is your son this morning?

LAMBARDAR: He's training a horse out there in the fields.

SOCRATES: What is it being trained for?

LAMBARDAR: For riding, of course.

SOCRATES: I did not know any special training was needed.

LAMBARDAR: Yes, of course, Socrates. Bullocks must be taught to plough and pull carts, and horses must be taught to carry riders and to play polo and every other of the many duties they may have to perform.

SOCRATES: Indeed! How elaborate is the work of a zamindar when he has to train all his animals for their work.

Just then the lambardar's wife called to the lambardar and asked whether all the arrangements were complete for their daughter's wedding.

SOCRATES: Oh! may I congratulate you? When will the wedding take place?

LAMBARDAR: The ceremonies will start to-morrow.

SOCRATES: Your daughter has been taught and trained, I suppose, for her future married life?

LAMBARDAR: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: Well, didn't you say your animals had to be carefully trained for all the duties they might have to perform?

LAMBARDAR: Yes; what has that to do with it?

SOCRATES: Well, isn't it equally necessary to train girls for their future duties?

LAMBARDAR: Well, she can grind corn, she can make dung-cakes, and cook a bit. What more would you have? After all, she's only a woman.

SOCRATES: Splendid! Her husband will be indeed lucky to have such a carefully trained wife.

LAMBARDAR: Of course he will be; and haven't I spent a fortune on her jewellery? Ah me! He is a good lad, though. God grant he may have children to carry on his name! His father's grandchildren have so far all died in infancy—such is his luck!

SOCRATES: It is the heart's desire of every villager to see his children grow up strong and healthy?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, indeed, that is our whole prayer.

SOCRATES: Who brings up the children?

LAMBARDAR: Their mother, of course.

SOCRATES: And this is her most important duty?

LAMBARDAR: By far.

SOCRATES: And with all the diseases and accidents and the unfortunately insanitary state of our villages, it must be her most difficult duty?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, it is. As I said, our friend's grandchildren have all died young and he is still without grandchildren.

SOCRATES: The responsibility of the mother is indeed great.

LAMBARDAR: Yes, it is. I hope my daughter will not fail.

SOCRATES: Not with the careful training I am sure she has had.

LAMBARDAR: There you go again! What do you mean?

SOCRATES: Didn't you just tell me that all your animals are carefully trained for their future duties? Your daughter is far more important than your cattle. You have surely trained her thoroughly in all the difficult work of bringing up children.

LAMBARDAR: What do you mean? I told you she could grind corn, make dung-cakes and cook rough food. What more do you want?

SOCRATES: I suppose your daughter has been taught about washing and feeding babies, making and mending their clothes, how to deal with their simple ailments, sore eyes, cuts and bruises and pains inside? She knows how to ventilate her house and how to avoid smallpox, fever, plague, and so on?

LAMBARDAR: Don't be foolish, old man. What do I know about all these things, let alone my daughter, who is a mere child and a woman at that? These things are all decreed by fate. If God wills, her children will grow up straight and healthy. If God wills otherwise—well, it is fate.

SOCRATES: But what about vaccination, and quinine, latrines

and mosquito nets? You were a soldier once and know all about these things, and you know very well that the more attention paid to these things the healthier the regiment was.

LAMBARDAR: Yes, you are right; but what has a woman to do with all that?

SOCRATES: A very great deal, indeed, O lambardar, if she wants healthy children! Can your daughter make clothes?

LAMBARDAR: No, I'm afraid not; there's not much time to learn—the flour-mill and the dung-cake and all the other work leave little leisure. Besides, who's to teach her? Her mother never learnt to sew.

SOCRATES: But the cattle can easily grind the corn with a kharās,[1] and, as for dung-cakes, why not stop them altogether and use wood or coke, and double your crops and your wealth by using the dung to manure the fields?

LAMBARDAR: I could do that, I dare say; but she's only a woman. What's the use of bothering about her?

SOCRATES: But you just said the bringing up of children was the most important duty of the girls?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And it was of vital importance to have healthy children to carry on your name?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And you said the children are very apt to die in infancy?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And you admitted that a lot could be done to make things healthier in a regiment?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And a village is much the same as a regiment, I suppose?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

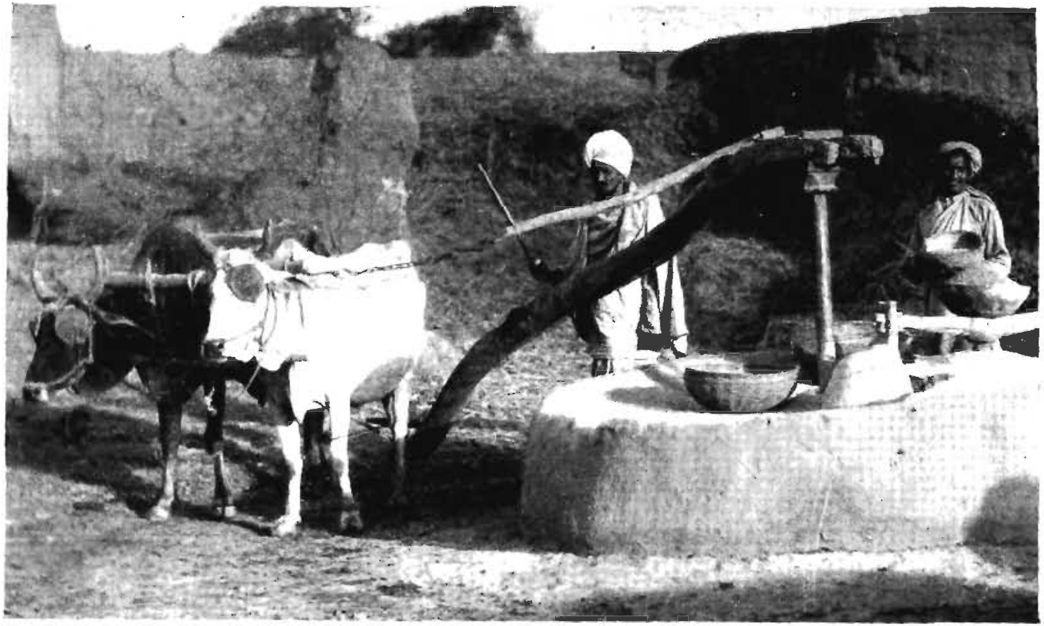
SOCRATES: And you admitted that, after all, it was not all fate?

LAMBARDAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then why not give the future mother a chance and train her for this, her most important duty?

LAMBARDAR: How?

[1] Bullock-driven flour-mill.



THE KHARAS AT WORK

The bullock driven flour-mill to relieve the women of the drudgery of grinding corn. If the oxen were not blindfolded they would get dizzy and fall down

SOCRATES: Send her to school.

LAMBARDAR: Where? There's no girls' school here.

SOCRATES: There is a boys' school?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: Who is going to bring up the children—the father or the mother?

LAMBARDAR: The mother, of course.

SOCRATES: Then why not send her to school instead of the boys? Why have a boys' school when a girls' school is far more necessary? But why shouldn't your girl and your boy go to the same school?

LAMBARDAR: Don't be silly, Socrates; you know it is impossible.

SOCRATES: Why, O lambardar?

LAMBARDAR: Boys are boys and girls are girls; how can they go to school together?

SOCRATES: They all play together round the village, don't they?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: No one supervises them or looks after them?

LAMBARDAR: No.

SOCRATES: Do they ever come to harm?

LAMBARDAR: No, of course not; don't insinuate such a thing against us honest villagers.

SOCRATES: They will be supervised and looked after at school?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Well, why should they come to harm there, then?

LAMBARDAR: Well, when you put it like that, Socrates, I really do see no objection.

SOCRATES: Then send your girls to school, so that they may acquire some education and be able to learn the simple principles of running a home and bringing up children. Perhaps then you won't be so absolutely the slaves of fate, and have to see your children die through the neglect and ignorance of their mothers.

LAMBARDAR: Socrates, it is too late for me and my children, but I will try and make my grandchildren educate their girls for their future responsibilities.

THE COST OF UPLIFT

WHEN Socrates reached the chaupāl he found a great stir and everyone talking at once.

SOCRATES: What's the matter, brothers? Has someone invented a new machine for cutting the crops, or a new pump for getting water out of the well?

VILLAGERS: No, of course not; why should anyone do anything of the sort? Aren't you satisfied with what we've got already? You're always worrying about new-fangled things.

SOCRATES: Well, what is it, anyway, that's exciting you?

VILLAGERS: We've been asked to pay a subscription every harvest.

SOCRATES: What tyranny!

VILLAGERS: You may well call it tyranny. Unheard of! What an insult! We wretched zamindars, who're already ground down with taxation!

SOCRATES: I do sympathize with you in this dreadful calamity. You won't pay, of course?

VILLAGERS: Oh dear, no.

SOCRATES: Quite right, too.

VILLAGERS: Why, only last week a bābuji[1] came, in lovely European clothes, and said, 'If you elect me your member next time, I will get your land revenue and taxes reduced in Council'.

SOCRATES: Splendid fellow! I hope he succeeds in the election.

VILLAGERS: I'm sure he will. We'll all vote for him.

SOCRATES: What was this subscription wanted for? Building a clock-tower in Simla, I suppose?

VILLAGERS: No, not exactly. They wanted it for the uplift campaign, they said.

SOCRATES: Oh, well, that's not so bad. I hardly call that tyranny and insolence.

[1] Educated man.

VILLAGERS: Why not? Isn't it the duty of Government to do all this?

SOCRATES: Yes, of course; but isn't it your duty to help too?

VILLAGERS: No; why?

SOCRATES: Well, all these things cost money, don't they, unless you do them yourselves?

VILLAGERS: Yes, they do.

SOCRATES: If you expect Government to send men specially to your village, it must cost money.

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: They have to be trained, they have to travel about, and they want pay and T.A.[1] and all these things?

VILLAGERS: Yes, naturally.

SOCRATES: They must make a living, even if they are doing good works?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And it costs many more times to get this work of preaching uplift and showing you what to do done by a paid staff, than if you spent your spare time doing it yourselves?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: Then who is to pay for it?

VILLAGERS: Why, Government, of course.

SOCRATES: But in the last six years you've had many miles of metalled roads built.

VILLAGERS: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: And many hospitals opened?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And the schools and pupils have nearly doubled?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: In fact, everything has been done for you with increasing rapidity?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And have your taxes increased?

VILLAGERS: No, not at all.

SOCRATES: And everything is more expensive nowadays than it used to be?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

[1] Travelling allowance.

SOCRATES: Then where do you suppose the money is going to come from for doing all this work?

VILLAGERS: From the Government.

SOCRATES: But isn't the Government you yourselves, and don't you provide all the taxes; or does Government get the money from some mine or treasure house?

VILLAGERS: We pay all the taxes, of course.

SOCRATES: Then how is all this increasing work to be done if you don't pay more?

VILLAGERS: But we are so poor.

SOCRATES: But doesn't all this work vastly increase your wealth?

VILLAGERS: How?

SOCRATES: Well, take this 8-A[1] wheat seed; it gives you more grain and more straw.

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What is the difference in value per acre? About ten or fifteen rupees?

VILLAGERS: Quite that.

SOCRATES: And how much is now sown in the district?

VILLAGERS: We hear about ten thousand acres.

SOCRATES: That makes one to one and a half lakhs extra value for the crops?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: What about Hissar[2] bulls? There are now seven hundred in the district?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is true, we believe.

SOCRATES: I suppose each bull has fifty calves a year?

VILLAGERS: More than that; it's about seventy-five or a hundred, we believe.

SOCRATES: Well, take fifty. How many calves will seven hundred bulls give a year?

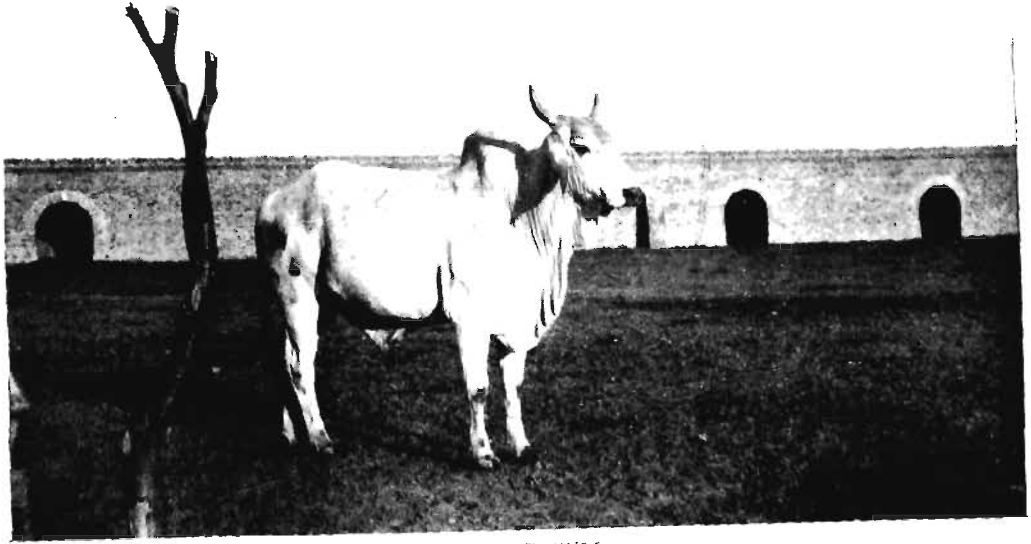
SCHOOLBOY: Thirty-five thousand, Socratesji.

SOCRATES: I thought your father couldn't work that out! And how much more is each calf worth than if its sire was an ordinary Brahmani[3] bull?

[1] Punjab 8-A, an improved variety of wheat.

[2] Bulls from the Government Cattle Farm, Hissar.

[3] Bull loosed for religious reasons; selected for its cheapness, not its pedigree or shape.



A HISSAR BULL

VILLAGERS: Oh, anything from twenty-five to a hundred rupees.

SOCRATES: And then, in three or four years, these half-bred Hissar cow calves will have calves, and further improvement will take place?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: Well, shall we allow an average of thirty rupees per calf?

VILLAGERS: That is well within the mark

SOCRATES: Then thirty times thirty-five thousand?

SCHOOLBOY: One lakh, five thousand.

SOCRATES: Think again, my boy.

PATWARI: Ten and a half lakhs.

SOCRATES: That's better—*ten and a half lakhs* of rupees a year. And what about the pitted manure? You get more manure now you pit it?

VILLAGERS: Yes, much more.

SOCRATES: And it has much more strength than the stuff in the old heaps?

VILLAGERS: Yes, very much.

SOCRATES: And there are about fifty thousand pits now?

VILLAGERS: They say so.

SOCRATES: And each pit is emptied once, and sometimes twice, a year?

VILLAGERS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And its contents are worth at least thirty rupees in extra crops?

VILLAGERS: It is more like a hundred rupees each, Socrates!

SOCRATES: Well, say thirty to be on the safe side. That gives how much extra crops a year?

SCHOOLBOY: Fifteen lakhs, Socratesji.

SOCRATES: Right this time my boy; and what about the reduction of disease by the new cleanliness and the reduction of fever?

VILLAGERS: That's worth a good lot, too.

SOCRATES: And the twelve hundred Persian wheels you have now?

VILLAGERS: They're a regular gold mine, Socratesji!

SOCRATES: And the reduction of jewellery and men's ear-rings and children's ornaments, and the reduction of expenditure on weddings and 'wakes', and so on?

VILLAGERS: That's worth a good deal.

SOCRATES: And what about the interest saved on your twenty-five lakhs of co-operative bank capital?

VILLAGERS: That's a tidy sum too, we dare say; only we never could work out sums of interest.

SOCRATES: Shall we say fifty lakhs a year for everything put together?

VILLAGERS: That's a very low estimate.

SOCRATES: Well, anyway, let's take it at that. And what's your land revenue?

PATWARI: Sixteen lakhs for the district.

SOCRATES: Then you get at least three times your land revenue in extra profit from the money spent on the uplift work?

VILLAGERS: That seems so.

SOCRATES: And yet you grudge a subscription and want your taxes reduced?

VILLAGERS: Till now we did, but you make us a bit uncertain.

SOCRATES: It seems that every rupee spent in this work brings in every year at least ten or twenty rupees profit to yourselves?

VILLAGERS: Much more than that, when you come to work it out as you have done.

SOCRATES: Then it would be wiser if you paid more, instead of less, taxes?

VILLAGERS: We really think it would be, Socrates, but we never thought of it like that.

SOCRATES: And your would-be Member of Council, when he asks for your votes so that he may reduce your taxes, is really going to harm you instead of benefiting you?

VILLAGERS: It seems so, indeed.

SOCRATES: So that money spent in uplift and development is really an extremely sound investment, and brings in a huge return in improved crops and improved health, comfort and happiness.

VILLAGERS: That is certainly true.

SOCRATES: Then pay the subscriptions, and, instead of electing a member who will reduce your taxes, elect one who will develop

and uplift the country, and will not be afraid to raise more revenue to do so.

Villagers: We will, Socrates, most certainly.

Socrates: One more thing, O foolish villagers! I believe you waste more money every year on jewellery, on litigation, on bribery, on compound interest, and on such-like useless and wicked expenditure, than would pay all the land revenue and all the subscriptions you were ever asked for ten times over.

Villagers: That's perfectly true, Socrates. We are bound to admit it.

Socrates: And, what is still worse, you will pay a bribe of a thousand rupees or spend a thousand rupees on a law suit or on jewellery without a murmur, while, if anyone asks you for five rupees for the Boy Scouts or to help with a Baby Show, you will make a noise all round the village and say you are being robbed and looted.

Villagers: You make us hang our heads with shame.

SENSIBLE FARMING

SOCRATES and the lambardar came walking along the road to to the village. Suddenly Socrates stopped and put the tail of his pagri to his nose and said, 'What a stink!'

LAMBARDAR: It is some wretched child. They are always fouling the village—the little beasts!

SOCRATES (*laughing*): Then I should say the whole population of your village consists of children—from what I have seen and smelt, lambardarji! Who looks after the children?

LAMBARDAR: Why, the mothers, of course.

SOCRATES: And the children do what their mothers teach them to do?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, they do.

SOCRATES: And they do what they see their mothers doing? and what they see their fathers doing?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, they do.

SOCRATES: Then, until their mothers and their fathers stop fouling the village there is little hope that the children will behave any better.

LAMBARDAR: That is so, I suppose, Socrates, and I am afraid it is the parents that teach the child bad habits.

Just then a man came up with a bag of seed on his head.

'Rām, Rām,' said Socrates, 'what are you carrying to-day?'

'Wheat seed,' said the man.

SOCRATES: Where did you buy it?

VILLAGER: From the bania.[1]

SOCRATES: What kind of wheat seed is it?

VILLAGER: Just the ordinary stuff which everyone buys.

SOCRATES: And the same sort of stuff that he sells for you to eat?

VILLAGER: Yes, just the same.

SOCRATES: The bania, I suppose, selects the best seed for

[1] Shopkeeping and money-lending caste.

sowing and is an expert in the various kinds of seed and the various qualities?

VILLAGER: Far from it, Socrates! He just takes what people bring him, and sells it indifferently for sowing or for eating.

SOCRATES: Where do you buy your ironwork?

VILLAGER: From the smith.

SOCRATES: And your jewellery?

VILLAGER: From the jeweller.

SOCRATES: And your sweets?

VILLAGER: From the sweetmeat seller.

SOCRATES: Then, why on earth do you not buy your seed from the seed merchant, instead of buying it from the ordinary shopkeeper?

VILLAGER: There is no seed merchant.

SOCRATES: What about 8-A wheat seed? Can you not buy that?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we can; but it is one seer[1] less to the rupee than what the bania sells.

SOCRATES: And how much more grain does it yield to the acre?

VILLAGER: Well, they tell me that the yield is from half a maund to a maund more per kutcha bigha[2] than the ordinary wheat.

SOCRATES: That is from two and a half to five maunds more to the acre.

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And how much seed do you sow to the acre?

VILLAGER: Nearly a maund.

SOCRATES: So if you use 8-A wheat seed, it will cost how much more to the acre?

VILLAGER: Between eight annas and a rupee.

SOCRATES: And the crops will be worth from ten to twenty rupees more?

VILLAGER: That is so.

SOCRATES: Then, would it not be more sensible to buy your wheat seed from the Government seed agent than from the ordinary shopkeeper?

[1] 2 lb. avoirdupois. [2] One-fifth of an acre.

VILLAGER: It seems so, Socrates; but the Government will want cash.

SOCRATES: Can you not get taccavi?

VILLAGER: Yes, taccavi is to be had for the asking.

SOCRATES: And what interest will the money-lender charge you?

VILLAGER: For seed, anything up to fifty per cent.

SOCRATES: And there is a co-operative bank in your village?

VILLAGER: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what interest do they charge?

VILLAGER: Twelve per cent, I believe.

SOCRATES: And you have not joined the bank?

VILLAGER: No, not yet.

SOCRATES: So that your idleness in not taking taccavi or joining the bank or buying seed from the Government depot is costing you enormous sums in interest, and you are getting many maunds less crops per acre than you would otherwise.

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so, Socrates; but laziness is very difficult to overcome.

SOCRATES: And why do you sow wheat at all, living so near Delhi?

VILLAGER: All good farmers sow wheat.

SOCRATES: But there is a metalled road and a railway running into Delhi?

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so. What have they to do with it?

SOCRATES: The people in Delhi pay high prices for vegetables, for charcoal, for doob[1] grass, and for all manner of crops like garlic, tobacco, cummin, etc.

VILLAGER: Yes, I suppose they do. What has it got to do with us? We are zamindars, not mālis.[2]

SOCRATES: But when wheat is ripening you are very liable to get hail?

VILLAGER: Yes, unfortunately, we often do.

SOCRATES: And when you want labour to cut your wheat everyone else is reaping his wheat?

SOCRATES: So not only is your crop liable to destruction by hail, but most of the profits of growing it go in labour.

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: Then why not take advantage of Delhi, follow the example of the māli, grow expensive crops and be comfortably off?

VILLAGER: We never thought of that. We have always left those sorts of crops to the mālis.

SOCRATES: But is there anything disgraceful in making big profits out of the land?

VILLAGER: No, certainly not. It is the wisest thing to do.

SOCRATES: And you have a Persian wheel now?

VILLAGER: Yes, I have.

SOCRATES: But it is idle for six months in the year?

VILLAGER: Yes, it is, I am afraid. We only use it for growing wheat in the rabi.[1]

SOCRATES: So the money you spent on the well and on the Persian wheel lies idle for six months every year?

VILLAGER: Yes, it does.

SOCRATES: And if you kept on sowing something and reaping something all the year round, of the various crops I have mentioned, you and your cattle and your wheel would never be idle, nor would you be overworked at harvest time and have to waste your money hiring labour as you do now.

VILLAGER: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: Then make your plans so that you and your cattle will always be busy, but never overworked and never idle, and in this way you will get the greatest value both from your well and from your Persian wheel.

[1] Spring harvest.

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

SOCRATES: I am a very sad man to-day, O villagers! I expected to see some model villages.

VILLAGERS: Well, didn't you?

SOCRATES: They were models sure enough, but models of dirt and squalor.

VILLAGERS: Oh, where have you been?

SOCRATES: Well, I thought that if I went to a village where there was a rural dispensary, I should find everything perfect and the village clean and sanitary, the children clean and bright, mosquito nets in use and everything spick and span.

VILLAGERS: Well, wasn't it so?

SOCRATES: Not in the least—the village with a dispensary and a cultured and educated doctor was as dirty and degraded as any other, even in the neighbourhood of the dispensary, and not a thing had been done to improve things.

VILLAGERS: We are not surprised, Socrates, as the villages with schools in them and half a dozen masters are just as bad as the others; so why should you expect the presence of a hospital to improve matters?

SOCRATES: Then I went to a village owned by a single man, who is educated and wears foreign clothes and is obviously highly cultured.

VILLAGERS: What did you expect to find there?

SOCRATES: Why, a perfect spot, of course.

VILLAGERS: And did you?

SOCRATES: Well, I made certain I was in the wrong village, as it was exactly the same as any other, and it took a long time to persuade me I had come to the right place. But there it was, just as squalid as any other.

VILLAGERS: You are an optimist, Socrates. When will you learn that we are all alike, educated and uneducated, rich and poor? As long as we are not disturbed ourselves, and can get our food and our pleasures, little else matters.

SOCRATES: This is indeed depressing. There must be something wrong somewhere, as this means that there never can be any progress until this attitude is radically changed.

VILLAGERS: You are right.

SOCRATES: I think we must tackle the young, as you greybeards are past change now.

VILLAGERS: There you are right. It will be easier to change the children than the elders.

SOCRATES: Then we must get hold of the children and teach them that there is more in life than eating and sleeping and smoking, and try and make them desirous of improving themselves and desirous of helping each other.

VILLAGERS: What an excellent thing, Socrates; but how on earth will you do it?

SOCRATES: I seem to remember hearing of an institution called 'Boy Scouts'. Do you know anything of it?

VILLAGERS: Yes, you are right. We saw some at a mēla, helping the old women and children and doing all manner of menial work for other people.

SOCRATES: That's the thing I want—people who will do even menial work to help others. I want people who will teach the boys ideals of service, teach them to desire improvement, teach them unselfishness.

VILLAGERS: Excellent, Socrates! We must try and find these Boy Scout workers and see if they can help you.

SOCRATES: But I don't want only the little boys to learn. I want this taught in the colleges too, so that every man who becomes a Government servant or a teacher will have in him a determination to help his fellow men and to make the world better.

VILLAGERS: You want a great deal, Socrates. You must tackle our colleges and schools and professors and everyone who teaches, and try and make them do as you wish.

SOCRATES: Indeed, I must. I see that we must get a new spirit spread abroad among our educated people—the spirit of service—and then, whatever profession they follow, they will be always ready and anxious to help.

VILLAGERS: But if the doctor helps to clean the village, and the engineer gives a lecture on ventilating the houses, or the

schoolmaster tells the women how to clean their children, they will all want extra pay and allowances.

SOCRATES: No, they won't; not if I can get hold of their teachers at college and make them teach the spirit of service. They will be Boy Scouts when they are at school and learn habits of self-reliance, unselfishness and service; and when they go to college they will continue this, so that when they go out into the world they will do their best to help their fellow men and women to improve their homes and villages and lead better lives in every way.

VILLAGERS: May you succeed, Socrates, and you will indeed make this country a paradise.

BURNING SILVER AND GOLD

SOCRATES was going through the fields with several zamindars, and the crops were very poor.

'Why are the crops so bad?' said Socrates.

VILLAGERS: The land is bodi, and is getting more and more bodi every year.

SOCRATES: Why is that?

VILLAGERS: We are sure we do not know, but this is a fact.

SOCRATES: I, too, have heard many people say so. You burn your cow-dung here, I suppose?

VILLAGERS: Yes, of course we do, and have always done so.

SOCRATES: You cultivate all your land every year, nowadays, don't you?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we have to. Our population has increased and all the land has come under cultivation.

SOCRATES: In the old days the land used to lie fallow every second or third year?

VILLAGERS: Yes, it did.

SOCRATES: You put very little manure into the land nowadays?

VILLAGERS: There is not nearly enough for every field every year.

SOCRATES: Manure is the food of the land, isn't it?

VILLAGERS: Yes, it is.

SOCRATES: And the cow-dung that you burn is the best food of all for the land?

VILLAGERS: Yes, it is.

SOCRATES: And this cow-dung comes out of the land in the shape of grain and straw?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: So every year you take strength out of the land, but refuse to give the land back its due?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we suppose that is so.

SOCRATES: And year after year you keep the land hungry and expect it to work for you?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we are afraid we do, Socrates.

SOCRATES: In the old days, when you only took occasional crops out of the land, it had time to recover, but now you cultivate it every year. The land is getting weaker and weaker because you refuse to feed it.

VILLAGERS: That must be correct, Socrates, and explains why we get poorer crops now than we used to.

SOCRATES: And yet you blame the land by saying it is weak, instead of saying, 'We have starved the land and it can no longer serve us.'

VILLAGERS: Yes, you are right, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then if you want good crops you must either find something else to burn or you must find something else for manure. You must go on trying until you succeed, as you will never get good crops the way you farm at present.

VILLAGERS: That seems so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I think the easiest thing to do is to find something else to burn.

VILLAGERS: What shall we burn?

SOCRATES: The principal thing you want dung-cakes for is to boil the milk and keep the hookah going.

VILLAGERS: That is so. We can cook our food over wood or charcoal.

SOCRATES: Well, then, abandon the hookah for a bit until you have found something else instead of dung-cakes, and as for the milk, many people already set their milk without a fire.

VILLAGERS: Yes, we have heard of that, but we prefer a fire.

SOCRATES: Well, use a wood fire.

VILLAGERS: But if we use a wood fire the women can't leave the milk boiling while they attend to other work.

SOCRATES: What other work?

VILLAGERS: Why, making more dung-cakes, we suppose.

SOCRATES: But then, if you burn wood there will be no dung-cakes to make and the woman will then be able to sit by the fire, and while she is tending the fire she will be able to sew or knit, teach the children to read, or do any of the other things you want your women to do.

VILLAGERS: That is true, Socrates. Once our women can stop making dung-cakes they will have leisure for the many

things which, since the girls have started going to the village school, they have learnt to do.

SOCRATES: Then stop making dung-cakes, and let those who want to boil milk boil it over a wood fire and sit by the wood fire doing their other work.

VILLAGERS: But where will the wood come from?

SOCRATES: Wood is like wheat or any other crop. If you want it you must sow it.

VILLAGERS: Who ever heard of sowing trees!

SOCRATES: Every sensible man sows trees if he wants timber or firewood.

VILLAGERS: Very well, we will sow them; but where?

SOCRATES: Why, on your waste land outside and inside the village, in your yards, round your ponds, along both sides of your roads—there are plenty of places to sow trees; and many of your villages have got hills and waste grounds where nothing else would grow, and many of your villages have got bannis which are usually full of rubbish that is useless either for firewood or timber. Cut all that out and sow firewood trees.

VILLAGERS: Even then I doubt if we shall have enough.

SOCRATES: Well, there are the stalks of cotton and the stalks of the oilseeds, like sarson and til and the stalks of arhar, gowar,[1] and then there is pampas grass and near the rivers you have jhao.[2]

VILLAGERS: Well, even all that will probably be insufficient.

SOCRATES: Make the most of them all, and if that is not enough then experiment with coal and coke, and see if it is not cheaper to buy (co-operatively, of course) truck-loads of coke and coal for your fires, and so save your precious manure for the fields.

VILLAGERS: That is very advanced, Socrates; but for those living near the railway it might be possible, when we have all learnt the tremendous value of dung as manure.

'And, finally,' said Socrates to the villagers as he went away, 'there is a wonderful new magic called bijli.[3] They make it somehow out of the rivers and carry it on wires wherever they like, and this wonderful bijli will give you light or cook your food or do anything you want. It is possible that in time, if you can't get

[1] A fodder seed. [2] Tamarisk. [3] Electricity.

enough fuel to burn, it will be worth your while to bring in this bijli from the rivers by wires, to cook your food for you, so that you may be able to save the precious cow-dung for your fields.

VILLAGERS: You are looking a long way ahead, Socrates, but we have never found you wrong yet, so even this wonderful thing may come to pass.

SOCRATES: We will see; but, whatever else you do, stop burning silver and gold as you do now when you burn upla.[1] You wouldn't burn the food of yourselves or your cattle, so why burn the food of your land?

VILLAGERS: That is certainly sound common sense, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And only the other day I saw a cream separator working, and they told me it produces more and cleaner ghi, takes far less time, and only a fifth of the fuel. Why not try one of them?

VILLAGERS: We will, Socrates.

[1] Dung-cakes.

WASTE

VILLAGERS: We get poorer every day, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I believe it, O villagers, and am not surprised.

VILLAGERS: *Why, old man?*

SOCRATES: You waste everything you have.

VILLAGERS: *Waste! How waste? We are far too poor to* waste anything.

SOCRATES: You are the most wasteful people in the world.

VILLAGERS: Explain yourself a bit, Socrates. We neither gamble nor drink. We don't buy expensive clothes or ride in motor cars.

SOCRATES: There are many other ways of wasting your wealth than these.

VILLAGERS: Well, tell us some of them.

SOCRATES: Well, first you waste your village refuse and sweepings by throwing them out in the open on heaps, where they will blow away in the wind, be scattered by cattle, dried up by the sun, and washed away by the rain.

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is true, we fear.

SOCRATES: And you waste the most valuable thing that God has given you.

VILLAGERS: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: You burn all your cow-dung.

VILLAGERS: That is also true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And you waste your time and labour by sowing bad seed instead of good.

VILLAGERS: That is true, Socrates. We do not bother much as to where we buy our seed.

SOCRATES: And you breed and feed bad cattle instead of good, although bad cattle eat as much as good, and they do only half the work and give less than half the milk.

VILLAGERS: I am afraid you are right again there.

SOCRATES: And you waste your women's time grinding the corn which your cattle could do much quicker, and in making

dung-cakes, when they ought to be doing the far more important work of looking after and washing their children and making clothes for the whole family.

VILLAGERS: That is true also.

SOCRATES: So that you have to waste your money buying clothes from the darzi and your children remain dirty, uncared for and unhealthy.

VILLAGERS: That is a fact, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And you use a charsa[1] instead of a Persian wheel, and that wastes the labour both of yourselves and of your cattle.

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And you reap your crops with an implement not much bigger than a tooth-pick, and thereby waste more time and labour?

VILLAGERS: Yes, Socrates; our sickle is not a very big implement.

SOCRATES: And you plough with an antiquated piece of twisted wood, when you know very well that one ploughing with the Gurgaon plough is equal to four with your old wooden plough?

VILLAGERS: That is quite true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Does not that waste more time and labour?

VILLAGERS: Yes, it does.

SOCRATES: And you put your money into jewellery, losing money in the making of the jewellery?

VILLAGERS: Yes, we lose money in making jewellery.

SOCRATES: And it is steadily worn away by use?

VILLAGERS: Yes, it soon wears away.

SOCRATES: Whereas if you put it into the co-operative bank it would steadily increase?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so.

SOCRATES: And you waste your health by not using mosquito nets and quinine and by not vaccinating your children.

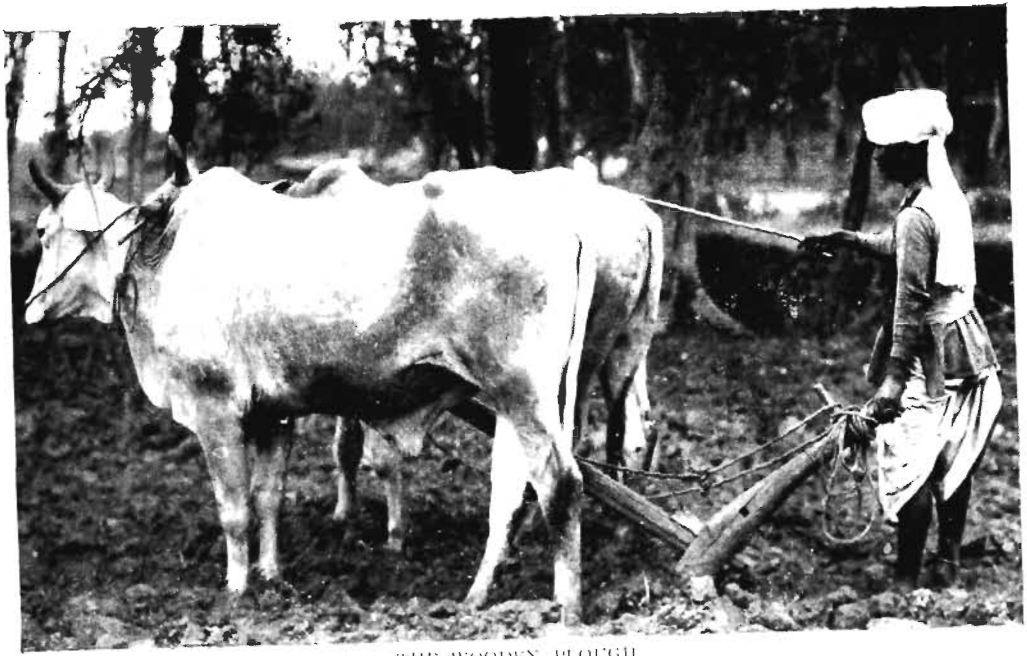
VILLAGERS: Yes, we do.

SOCRATES: And you waste your money over expensive marriage ceremonies, death ceremonies, wakes, etc., and in litigation?

[1] Leather bag, requiring four able-bodied men and four bullocks to work it.

THE CHARSA

The leather bag—the most expensive form of irrigation ever devised



THE WOODEN PLOUGH

VILLAGERS: Yes, a lot of money is spent in these things.

SOCRATES: And you borrow money at thirty-six per cent, instead of joining the bank and getting it at twelve per cent.

VILLAGERS: That is also true.

SOCRATES: Shall I tell you any more, or is that enough to convince you how wasteful you are?

VILLAGERS: Enough, enough, Socrates! We are indeed a feckless people.

SOCRATES: What it comes to is, then, that you do not so much need wonderful new inventions to make you rich as to be told how not to waste the wealth and resources that God has already given you. You want to be taught how to use and how to spend what you have already got, rather than to be taught new things and shown new schemes. But I will tell you one more thing that you waste, if you like.

VILLAGERS: What is that, Socrates? We may as well hear it all now you are wound up.

SOCRATES: There is much more, but I will just mention one thing.

VILLAGERS: Well, go on.

SOCRATES: What is that banni over there? Why do you not cut down the trees and sell them and use them?

VILLAGERS: Our parents left it to us as a reserve for the cattle, and we are not allowed to cut anything from it.

SOCRATES: But what are the trees and bushes in it?

VILLAGERS: Jāl, hins, karīl, and cactus are the principal trees and shrubs.

SOCRATES: Do cattle eat any of these?

VILLAGERS: No.

SOCRATES: Is there any grass growing there?

VILLAGERS: No, there are too many bushes and trees for grass to grow.

SOCRATES: Then this banni that your ancestors left you for cattle is so overgrown with stuff which cattle will not eat that there is nothing there for the cattle to eat and very little room even for the cattle to stand. Do you not call that waste?

VILLAGERS: I am afraid it is waste indeed. You have found us out once more.

SOCRATES: Your ancestors left the banni for you to grow

trees and grass on, the grass for the cattle to eat and the trees for you to burn instead of cow-dung, so that the land would get the cow-dung and produce more grain for you and more fodder for the cattle. You, in your folly, neither cut down the trees to burn instead of dung-cakes, nor do you grow grass which the cattle will eat. If you want to carry out your ancestors' wishes, cut down the useless trees now blocking the land, sell them or divide them amongst yourselves, sow grass seed and the seed of trees which can be used as firewood and whose leaves can be used as fodder in times of famine.

VILLAGERS: We believe you are right, Socrates, and that this would be the best way of carrying out the wishes of our ancestors.

SOCRATES: When you stop wasting your resources you will no longer be poor men, but not till then. It is no use going on as you are doing now, and looking continually to Government to produce some miracle to double your wealth or run the administration without taxes. Your remedy lies in your own hands.

VILLAGERS: From all you have said, Socrates, we believe you are right. We must revise our ways of living and farming and not go on with our stupid old ways, foolishly hoping for some miracle to make us millionaires.

BAD BULLS

SOCRATES was sitting talking to a Brahman, and the cattle were passing by. Presently a little Brahmani bull came by, misshapen and undersized.

SOCRATES: Whose bull is that, Misrji?[1]

BRAHMAN: That belongs to no one; it is sacred.

SOCRATES: But it is used by you for your cows?

BRAHMAN: Oh yes; it is the only bull we have, and we keep it for our cows.

SOCRATES: Then, Misrji, I am surprised at a Brahman like you patronizing the slaughter house.

BRAHMAN (*very angry*): I do not understand, Socrates; and if you suggest such a thing here you will be killed.

SOCRATES: I am indeed sorry, Misrji, but the truth will slip out of my stupid mouth every now and then.

BRAHMAN: You lie, old man; it is not true. I do not patronise the vile thing you suggest.

SOCRATES: Yes, you do; why pretend you don't? It does not make things better.

BRAHMAN: How is it true then?

SOCRATES: That bull is very bad, isn't it?

BRAHMAN: It is not very good.

SOCRATES: I say it is extremely bad.

BRAHMAN: Well, it is rather poor.

SOCRATES: I say it is what they call 'damn bad'.

BRAHMAN: I don't know what you mean by your dam sham,[2] but I admit it is not a good bull.

SOCRATES: And its male calves will not be fit for ploughing and its cow calves will give very little milk.

BRAHMAN: The offspring will be poor, I admit.

SOCRATES: And will be slaughtered, will they not?

[1] Title of respect of a Brahman.

[2] Urdu idiom of repeating the vowel sound with changed consonants.

BRAHMAN: Shame! shame! Never! God forbid! How dare you insult me in this way?

SOCRATES: But if they are useless to you, you must get rid of them?

BRAHMAN: We may sell some of them, certainly.

SOCRATES: And the man you sell to will slaughter them?

BRAHMAN: Certainly not; we will make that a condition of sale. We never sell to butchers and such-like people.

SOCRATES: What will your purchaser do with them?

BRAHMAN: I don't know, I am sure.

SOCRATES: He will sell them in turn?

BRAHMAN: Yes, he may.

SOCRATES: With any condition?

BRAHMAN: How should I know?

SOCRATES: And so it will go on, every purchaser will find them useless and sell them?

BRAHMAN: They may.

SOCRATES: And finally the butcher will buy them.

BRAHMAN: That is, I fear, possible in the end.

SOCRATES: So that you are really patronizing the slaughter house, after all, Misrji.

BRAHMAN: But in any case the butcher must slaughter something. That is his profession.

SOCRATES: Will he slaughter the calves of Hissar bulls?

BRAHMAN: No, certainly not; they are worth far too much to waste in that way.

SOCRATES: Not even a butcher would do that?

BRAHMAN: Never!

SOCRATES: Then if you all keep Hissar bulls, it doesn't matter how you sell them or what you do with them, they will never see the slaughter house?

BRAHMAN: That is so.

SOCRATES: Then as long as you keep bad bulls you are a patron of the slaughter house.

BRAHMAN: It seems so, Socrates, but we never thought of it that way before. We considered it wicked to castrate a Brahmani bull, however bad.

SOCRATES: But in reality it is more holy to castrate it than to allow it to breed?

BRAHMAN: It seems so.

SOCRATES: And it is evidently never safe to follow an old custom blindly. Follow nothing blindly. Keep your eyes open. Consider it carefully and, if it is good, follow it; if not, leave it.

TWO TREASURIES

SOCRATES was sitting in the chaupāl when the Jemadar[1] came by, looking very busy and girded for a long walk.

'Where are you going,' said Socrates, 'Jemadar Sahib, to-day ?'

JEMADAR : I am going to the treasury to draw my pension.

SOCRATES : What is the treasury ?

JEMADAR : Don't you know ? It is the place where Government collects all its valuables.

SOCRATES : Then I suppose you all have treasuries in your village.

JEMADAR : What do you mean, Socrates ? We are very poor people. We have no treasuries.

SOCRATES : You have dug a pit now, haven't you, Jemadar Sahib ?

JEMADAR : Yes, I certainly have, after much persuasion from you.

SOCRATES : And you throw into it all your rubbish and muck ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And your house sweepings ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And all your ashes ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And all the weeds that grow round the village in the monsoon, you cut and throw in there ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And the old thatches of your huts you throw in there ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And the dung of your cattle you throw in there ?

JEMADAR : Yes.

SOCRATES : And the scrapings and sweepings of the streets and farmyards ?

[1] Indian commissioned officer.

JEMADAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: In fact, Jemadar Sahib, you put everything in there that you can possibly collect?

JEMADAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And it all rots, and several months afterwards you take it out and use it for manure?

JEMADAR: Yes, I do.

SOCRATES: And you get double the crops you used to?

JEMADAR: You are right, Socrates. I get at least double as much crops as before I started taking your advice in this matter.

SOCRATES: Then your pit is not a pit, but a treasury?

JEMADAR: Yes, Socrates, indeed it is. You are right. I have really got a treasury now.

SOCRATES: You belong to the village bank, don't you?

JEMADAR: Yes, I do; again on your advice.

SOCRATES: And you put into it all the money you can save, by the sale of your crops, and by your pension as well?

JEMADAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And by the sale of your cattle?

JEMADAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: And all the money you can possibly get hold of?

JEMADAR: Yes.

SOCRATES: You don't invest any money in jewellery now?

JEMADAR: No, I don't.

SOCRATES: So all your spare rubbish goes into the pit and all your spare money goes into the bank?

JEMADAR: That is so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then you not only have one treasury in your pit, but you have a second treasury in your bank?

JEMADAR: Yes, Socrates, you are right again; I have two treasuries.

SOCRATES: So every sensible zamindar has two treasuries—his pit and his bank—and as long as he abides by these two he will never be in want.

JEMADAR: You are right, Socrates. I have never been in want since I took your advice and dug a pit and joined the bank.

SOCRATES: Good luck, and a pleasant tramp to the treasury and back.

JEMADAR: Thank you; and good day, old friend.

FATALISM, OR 'MALIK KI MARZI'[1]

VILLAGER: O Socrates, my cup of woe is full; my crops are rotten, my children sick and my debts increasing. We zamindars have a very miserable lot. If only Government ——

SOCRATES: So it's Government to blame, is it?

VILLAGER: The rain ——

SOCRATES: And God is not faultless either.

VILLAGER: Well, don't I work hard and am I not worthy of all pity? When the Government ——

SOCRATES: Government again?

VILLAGER: Don't I pay land revenue? — and then the soil ——

SOCRATES: God once more in trouble! O unfortunate Providence, O wretched Government! You zamindars burn your manure or use it to poison your village, plough with an antiquated piece of twisted wood, buy seed from the sweetmeat seller instead of from the seed merchant, use a charsa instead of a Persian wheel to water with, borrow money at thirty-six per cent when the co-operative bank offers it at twelve per cent, live in filth, have no windows in your houses, refuse to vaccinate your children, and then, when your crops fail, your debts increase and your children fall sick, you blame God and the Government. My friends, you want a 'Bara Double Parmeshar',[2] and as for Government you want a poor-house, not a Government.

VILLAGER: Well, Socrates, what are we to do?

SOCRATES: Well, when things go wrong, think it out and see who is to blame, and whether you have done everything possible to keep yourselves in health and make your crops good; and if you have really done everything possible, then, if your state is still bad, you can begin to think of blaming God or the Government.

VILLAGER: But when our crops fail and our children get smallpox, it is 'Mālik ki marzi', isn't it?

[1] The will of the Almighty. [2] 'A double extra powerful providence.'

Socrates: But vaccinated children don't get smallpox?

Villager: No.

Socrates: Then is the vaccinator more powerful than the Mālik?[1]

Villager: No. What an idea!

Socrates: When plague came, why did your children die?

Villager: Mālik ki marzi.

Socrates: But the D.C.[2] came along and got you all inoculated and no more died?

Villager: Yes, that is so.

Socrates: Then is the D.C. mightier than the Mālik?

Villager: Of course not.

Socrates: Then vaccination and inoculation are also 'Mālik ki marzi'?

Villager: It seems so.

Socrates: And perhaps it is the will of God that the stuff which, if left in the villages will poison you and your children, should, if put in the field, give you double crops?

Villager: That is probably very true also.

Socrates: And iron ploughs and Persian wheels are also the will of God?

Villager: I suppose so.

Socrates: Perhaps then it is the will of God that you should live and not die, be healthy and not sick, have good crops instead of bad?

Villager: I suppose so.

Socrates: Then when your crops fail and your children die, don't say it is 'Mālik ki marzi', but find out what is wrong and put it right. The Mālik wishes you good, not evil, and it is only your idleness and stupidity that attribute all your misfortunes to Him instead of to your own folly and ignorance.

Villager: I shall remember this, O Socrates.

Socrates: And leave Government alone, too. Government takes your land revenue, which would not be a twentieth of your crops if you manured the land and farmed properly, and in return gives you protection, gives you schools, hospitals, roads and a hundred things you never heard of in the old days. So don't

[1] The owner of the world, God. [2] Deputy Commissioner, head of the district.

blame your own follies and mistakes on to Government, which is taking infinite pains to tell you how to put things right in your village.

VILLAGER: Very well, Socrates; I shall bear in mind what you say, and before badnāming[1] God and the Government will see if it is not me myself to blame.

[1] Giving a bad name to.

COMFORTABLE VILLAGES

SOCRATES: Rām, Rām, Chaudhriji.[1] Where have you come from?

CHAUDHRI: I have been to my garden.

SOCRATES: Where is that?

CHAUDHRI: Outside the village there on my well.

SOCRATES: How far away?

CHAUDHRI: About half a mile.

SOCRATES: How long have you been there?

CHAUDHRI: Only one night, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I hope you left your wife and children in good health there, Chaudhriji—it must be such a jolly place for them to live in, away from the dogs and the smells and the dust of the village.

CHAUDHRI: What do you mean, old man? Your mind seems to be wandering to-day.

SOCRATES: Well, you said you had a garden, didn't you?

CHAUDHRI: Yes.

SOCRATES: And I know you have a family.

CHAUDHRI: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, where else would they be except in your garden, where they can live in healthy fresh air and sit and play among beautiful flowers?

CHAUDHRI: There are not many flowers there, Socrates, and my family is in that house yonder.

SOCRATES: Well, what's the use of having a garden if your family don't enjoy it? They must leave the village at once to live there.

CHAUDHRI: Socrates, will you never be satisfied? We have made pits and put up screens round them, and two planks across them, for use as latrines. We clean the village daily and have an extra special cleaning day once a week, and at your bidding I have put up a Persian wheel and planted fruit trees and some vege-

[1] Title of a farmer.

tables at my well. We are all very grateful to you, as our health is far better and our crops are double, what with more manure, better water arrangements, better seed, better ploughing and more valuable crops. What more do you want, you restless old man?

SOCRATES: Well, your village is certainly clean, as you say; there is no smell and the pits used as latrines are a godsend, especially to your women. The dogs are much better, you keep a dog or two each with a collar on its neck, and a place to live in, and you feed them, give them names and train them a bit.

CHAUDHRI: Yes, we do all that and like it now, although it took a long time and a lot of persuading and pushing and driving.

SOCRATES: Well, somehow the village still isn't right. As I come along I find the place so untidy, so tumble-down, so ramshackle, I despair of your ever being comfortable.

CHAUDHRI: What is wrong then?

SOCRATES: Well, to start with, the streets are all so narrow that a cart can't go along many of them, and two carts can't pass anywhere. Lucky you are generally so good-tempered, or there'd be many a fight when two carts met in your streets!

CHAUDHRI: Yes, the streets are narrow, there's no authority to stop people building out, and where the streets are wide people build steps and chabutras[1] in front of their houses, and there's no one to say them nay.

SOCRATES: And then there are drains running down the sides of houses and pools of dirty water outside houses. These are horrible.

CHAUDHRI: How can we avoid them?

SOCRATES: Very difficult, I admit. People who have them should arrange to empty and clean them regularly, and certainly there should be no drains running down the sides of houses. That should all be done on the ground floor, and as much as possible on the wells, where you can have a proper drain running to a flower-bed, which will absorb the waste water.

CHAUDHRI: That is possible, but it will mean washing places for the women and children on the wells.

SOCRATES: And why not, old man? Your women have a hard enough life as it is, and without making a mess of their backyards

[1] Raised platforms.

cannot enjoy a good wash, and that is why your women and children are often so dreadfully dirty.

CHAUDHRI: True, Socrates; and, to please you, we will make a washing place on the drinking well for the women and their children and clothes.

SOCRATES: That's right, and you'll find a model in the Ladies' Garden at Gurgaon.

CHAUDHRI: What's that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Why, it used to be the men's garden, but now the sensible people there have turned the men out and devoted it to the women, for their health and comfort.

CHAUDHRI: I must go and see it.

SOCRATES: No, you won't; but you can send your wife to see it.

CHAUDHRI: I will, but it won't do her much good; she won't understand anything.

SOCRATES: Yes, she will; she's not as ignorant as you think. She's very keen on improving things for herself and her children, and the ladies at the Women's Institute there will tell her all about it.

CHAUDHRI: Then I'll certainly take her to Gurgaon next time I go.

SOCRATES: But I haven't done with your narrow streets yet.

CHAUDHRI: What more, old man?

SOCRATES: And when one meets anyone carrying rubbish—generally a woman, as you men are too 'noble' to clean things yourselves—you are lucky if some of the dust and muck does not go down your neck, so narrow are the streets.

CHAUDHRI: Yes, that is true.

SOCRATES: And quite unnecessary.

CHAUDHRI: Oh, how? My wife would gladly be rid of the trouble of carrying basket-loads of rubbish on her head—we've learnt that much, Socrates, from you, that if we want a clean house and village we must clean it ourselves and not rely on sweepers.

SOCRATES: That is good—as it is a most sound principle that the best person to clean a village is the zamindar, who gains in crops by the additional manure and in health by the additional cleanliness. The sweeper cares nothing for your health or your crops, so will never scrape the place as clean as you zamindars will, however severely you talk to him.

CHAUDHRI: Yes, yes; but you need not preach us that sermon now. We want to know how to avoid carrying muck on our heads.

SOCRATES: Shābāsh, old man, but your wife's head you mean I think—not your own? I've never seen you carrying anything yet on your head.

CHAUDHRI: Well, let it pass; my wife's head, if you will, but go on.

SOCRATES: Why, use wheelbarrows, of course, instead of baskets. The village carpenter can learn at Gurgaon how to make them, and one trip with the barrow is equal to four or five with a headload, and your poor wife won't get her hair and clothes filthy with the muck that drops or blows out of the basket.

CHAUDHRI: Thank you, Socrates, that does sound a really useful idea and I'll try it.

SOCRATES: And then, perhaps, O noble man, you will condescend to help your overworked wife by occasionally wheeling the barrow yourself now that your noble head need not carry an inferior basket.

CHAUDHRI: I'll try, at any rate, Socrates, as you seem so particular about it.

SOCRATES: I haven't done with your village yet.

CHAUDHRI: What, more, old man?

SOCRATES: There are so many ruined houses, the home of rats and snakes, and the ground is all uneven and it is all so untidy, I want you and your Boy Scouts to spare a little time and level all that up, so that your children can run about there and play if they want to. Pull down all the ruins and level the ground, and make the place smart and tidy, and pave the streets and lanes with brick or stone.

CHAUDHRI: That is not hard, and once done will last a long time.

SOCRATES: Then do it, Chaudhriji, and quickly.

CHAUDHRI: I will, old man.

SOCRATES: And why make your garden a mile off the village? Why not make your village itself a garden?

CHAUDHRI: How?

SOCRATES: Well, I hardly know myself, but I think you must begin living on your wells and making them comfortable little homesteads, with flowers round them, just like Sada

SADA RAM

Ram[1] has done near Gurgaon. Keep your cattle there too, and gradually reduce the size of the ābādi,[2] so that the people left there can make themselves more comfortable, widen the streets and have little gardens in their courtyards, and so on. Wall in the open spaces and grow flowers there—but don't fence them with dead thorns, as these collect dirt, narrow the roads, and spread the flames from house to house when the wind blows and someone's house catches fire.

CHAUDHRI: It all sounds very nice and much of it is not difficult, but how are we to grow flowers on the bare spaces, even if we do wall them in?

SOCRATES: A low wall, two feet high, will keep out cattle, and the waste water from the well will be quite enough to keep the flowers going.

CHAUDHRI: That is not impossible, but it will require energy and some organization, both of which are not too common in our village.

SOCRATES: Yes, the hookah again, and your eternal jealousies and quarrels. Well, why not let the schoolmaster and his Boy Scouts run your village gardens?

CHAUDHRI: That is possible, Socratesji, as the Scouts are getting better and better nowadays and more willing to help, more sensible and more handy. Besides, the master has been trained at the Rural School at Gurgaon, and there are few questions he can't answer and few things he can't do. Why, he can adjust an iron plough and, what is more, he can plough straight furrows. He is a schoolmaster after my own heart.

SOCRATES: Splendid! I know that school; it's there they teach schoolmasters how to make village life more comfortable, and I am glad you like the teachers trained there. Now consult masterji and see how you can make your village still better than it already is.

CHAUDHRI: I will, Socratesji, and we will see what we can do to please you still more.

SOCRATES: Don't please me, old man. Make yourselves comfortable; that's all I ask.

[1] A peasant farmer who has followed our instructions for many years, to his immense benefit.

[2] Village dwelling site crowded with houses and no room to turn round in.

B.A., LL.B.

SOCRATES came into the chaupāl, as usual, and found a smart young man, in 'Europe' clothes, talking to the village elders in a very superior way, and the elders seemed very proud of him. The elders had their hookah, of course, but the young gentleman was smoking cigarettes. 'Good evening, sir,' said Socrates to him, and 'Rām, Rām,' to the elders.

'Rām, Rām,' said the lambardar, 'this is my eldest son—B.A., LL.B.'

'I am very glad to meet him,' said Socrates, 'and I am sure he will be a credit to you. I see he has learnt the law.'

LAMBARDAR: Yes, he is a pleader now.

SOCRATES: Then I suppose he has come to warn you all against the futility of litigation.

LAMBARDAR: Indeed, no; he has come to ask us to give him all our cases, and I hope that you, my bhaibands,[1] will use no one else but my son—and, by the way, chaudhriji, this seems a good opportunity for you to sue that vile fellow in the next patti[2] for the land he has encroached upon. God knows my son's education has cost me enough, and we must get some return for it.

CHAUDHRI: Yes, I might think of that case now.

SOCRATES: Then he will charge no fees for his services?

FATHER and SON (*together*): Oh, won't he? Of course he will. We have to live, haven't we?

SOCRATES: Then this legal training is going to stir up still more litigation and make the village still more quarrelsome and still more poor?

FATHER: Litigation is a curse, to be sure; but what can we do? This son of mine went to college and that was the most popular course of study to take, and he did what the others did.

SOCRATES: Why didn't he become a doctor or an engineer?

FATHER: That was a long and a difficult course, and he said

[1] Caste brothers. [2] Subdivision of a village.

that a lawyer was a much more important man than either of these.

SOCRATES: Why?

FATHER: Well, he said a lawyer was allowed to say and do much what he liked, and need respect no one or pay attention to anyone. He joins what he calls a Bar Association, which has no rules and no discipline, works when he likes and gets big fees, and altogether he said it was such a jolly life that he must become a lawyer.

SOCRATES: But if every boy becomes a lawyer how will they all live?

FATHER: I am sure I don't know, but there is plenty of litigation from us and our bhaibands to keep him busy.

SOCRATES: But, Pleader Sahib, what is your profession really?

PLEADER: We argue cases in the courts.

SOCRATES: What is the result?

PLEADER: One side or the other wins.

SOCRATES: And the other loses?

PLEADER: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And both sides are poorer than before?

PLEADER: Yes, generally.

SOCRATES: So that really both sides lose?

PLEADER: I suppose they do.

SOCRATES: Then your profession just helps people to become poorer?

PLEADER: Yes, that seems so.

SOCRATES: You don't help anyone, as a doctor does?

PLEADER: No.

SOCRATES: You don't build anything, like a bridge or an engine?

PLEADER: No.

SOCRATES: And you don't make anyone better, as a teacher or a preacher does?

PLEADER: No; they are probably made worse by their experience in the law courts.

SOCRATES: Then you produce nothing, your industry is not productive, as they say at your colleges?

PLEADER: No.

SOCRATES: You live and make money upon the quarrels and troubles of other people?

PLEADER: Yes, that is right.

SOCRATES: So that really your profession is parasitical; you live upon the public like a flea or a tick and do them no good?

PLEADER: You are hard, Socrates, but I cannot truthfully deny it.

SOCRATES: And, like a plague flea, you may do a lot of harm, as your litigation often leads in the end to riots and broken heads?

PLEADER: That is true, I fear, Socrates; but that's not what my students and professors taught me at college.

SOCRATES: Perhaps they are only paid to teach you law and not to open your eyes to the truths of real life. But, lambardarji, tell me now about this litigation. The lawyer's fees are the whole expense, I suppose, and you generally win and get it all back, and much more, I suppose?

FATHER: Would to God this were so. The lawyer's fees are but a fraction of the cost, and, win or lose, we gain nothing by it. The trouble and bother of collecting and tutoring the witnesses, going to and from court, getting copies and stamps, and the anxiety and everything else, the cost in time and worry and money is enormous, and these cases only make bad blood worse, and the end is generally a fight, and the police come in and a whole lot of new trouble starts.

SOCRATES: Would it not be better to teach them something useful, like farming or doctoring, than let them go into this useless and overcrowded profession?

FATHER: Yes, it would; but they don't obey their parents nowadays.

SOCRATES: Because you and your wife don't command any respect. You are both ignorant and dirty and the slaves of custom and superstition, and the moment your children learn to read and write your authority is gone, as it has no real foundation; and they begin to laugh at you, instead of respecting you more and more as they grow older and realize that you know as much and far more than they do.

FATHER: I fear you are right, Socrates. We old men don't count for much in this changing world.

SOCRATES: You only count in hugging the old dirty ways and resisting real progress. Good customs you let go and only stick to the bad ones.

FATHER: I fear there is truth in that, too, old man. You seem to see pretty deeply into our little troubles.

SOCRATES: Well, let that alone now. But about this lawyer son of yours now, wouldn't it be easier and cheaper to pay him to stay at home and do nothing rather than encourage him by giving him as many cases as possible?

FATHER: Far better; but our B.A. sons won't stay quiet in the villages. They are restless and dislike our villages.

SOCRATES (*laughing*): There I heartily agree with your B.A. son.

FATHER: Why, indeed? This place has been good enough for me and my ancestors since the village was founded. What is wrong with it for my son?

SOCRATES: Well, old man, times change. Your B.A. son doesn't like your hookah, and you don't like his cigarettes. He's learnt to sit on a chair and wear foreign clothes. You wear homespun and squat on the ground. You both irritate each other. He wants a daily newspaper and an occasional visit to the theatre or cinema. Your streets are so narrow, your village is so dirty and filthy; he is used to big college buildings and the streets and shops of the town.

FATHER: It is very hard for us, old-fashioned people, to keep pace with the changes of the world.

SOCRATES: You don't try, old man. Haven't I been telling you for years to tidy up your village and to educate your daughters?

FATHER: What difference would that make, O wise man?

SOCRATES: Well, if your son's wife was educated the same as your son is, they could be companions and she could make his home comfortable and pretty and cook his food properly; as it is, she is a drudge and the food is badly cooked, the home is uncomfortable, and your son's ideas and thoughts are entirely different from his wife's.

FATHER: That is so. I never thought of that when I married my son. We had no ideas when we were young, and I didn't realize my son's school and college would make all that difference.

I heard that the girl the barber[1] suggested was industrious at making dung-cakes and grinding corn, and I thought that was all that was needed.

SOCRATES: Your son is a B.A., LL.B. His wife is a B.A. of corn-grinding and an LL.B. of dung-cakes. How can they be happy together, old man? Her only idea is to wear more jewellery than her neighbour, and she will waste all that her husband earns; and the more her husband earns, the more the community is wasting its resources in litigation.

LAMBARDAR: You paint a very ugly picture, but it is no more than true; litigation is waste, and jewellery is waste.

SOCRATES: And until you make your villages comfortable and your homes comfortable, and educate your daughters to match your sons, your education will be wasted, as it will make your sons discontented and dissatisfied with their homes, and they will leave the village and take all the knowledge you have paid for with them.

LAMBARDAR: That seems true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: It certainly is, lambardarji, and the sooner you realize it the better for you all.

[1] The traditional village match-maker.

'BACHON KE BACHE'[1]

Socrates was going along the road and met a marriage procession. He took care to greet the father of the bridegroom and congratulate him.

Socrates: Your son is a lucky man, Chaudhriji.

Chaudhri: Why, O sage?

Socrates: Why, look at the number of carts and the jewellery. He starts his married life with much wealth.

Chaudhri: Oh dear no, Socrates, this is all done on borrowed money. I took a loan of two thousand rupees for this wedding.

Socrates: Then your son starts his married life with a heavy debt?

Chaudhri: Yes, he does, and so did I and so did my father.

Socrates: But isn't this a foolish thing to do?

Chaudhri: It is our custom, Socratesji.

Socrates: But wouldn't it be wise to think ahead a bit, instead of continuing this foolish custom, insuring that your sons shall all live their lives in debt?

Chaudhri: Indeed, it would be, but these customs are so hard to break.

Socrates: But your son, doesn't he object to this folly? He is surely educated and up-to-date. If you spend all this money on his wedding you have surely spent double this on his education, so as to give him a chance of recovering from these debts you force on him.

Chaudhri: What do you mean? He is only in the second class, and that costs nothing.

Socrates: What do you mean, Chaudhriji? Your son is grown-up, how is he in the second class only? Is he an idiot?

Chaudhri: No, Socrates, don't insult me. My son is a very clever lad.

Socrates: I don't understand you. One minute you say he's going to be married, and the next that he's a lad.

[1] The children of children.

CHAUDHRI: Well, what about it?

SOCRATES: But chokras[1] don't marry, Chaudhriji.

CHAUDHRI: Why not? I was married when I was twelve, and my father was married when he was twelve. What's the matter?

SOCRATES: What an appalling idea, to marry boys and girls before they leave school!

CHAUDHRI: Why, old man? I see no harm in the custom; it enables us to see our grandchildren growing up before we die.

SOCRATES: Yes, perhaps that's why you die so young and are old men before you're forty. If you waited till you were grown-up before you married, perhaps you would live longer.

CHAUDHRI: That may be so, Socrates. I have heard old men say that myself, but we don't listen to them when our customs are concerned.

SOCRATES: Surely early marriage will stunt the growth of the children and prevent them being as big and as strong as they would otherwise?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, that is probably so.

SOCRATES: And interfere with their schooling?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, that is certain.

SOCRATES: And interfere with the development of their minds?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, I dare say.

SOCRATES: And they will never learn the useful lesson of self-control?

CHAUDHRI: No, they certainly won't.

SOCRATES: These young married children will have children, I suppose?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, I hope so.

SOCRATES: And children's children will never be as strong and as big as the children of grown-up people?

CHAUDHRI: No.

SOCRATES: Perhaps that explains what you are always saying about the people being weak nowadays?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, that may be the cause; generations of child marriage may have weakened the race.

[1] Young boys.

A YOUNG BRIDEGROOM

SOCRATES: And these children of children will require more care and attention than others if they are to be brought up?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And their parents, being children and untrained in these matters, have no knowledge of how to bring them up?

CHAUDHRI: That is so.

SOCRATES: So that they have a double chance of dying as babies, being the children of children and their parents being quite ignorant of how to bring them up?

CHAUDHRI: Too true, I fear, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So that several of these poor babies will die before the mother learns how to bring them up?

CHAUDHRI: This often happens.

SOCRATES: 'Practice children,' Chaudhriji?

CHAUDHRI: That is about what it comes to, I fear, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And how cruel to the poor mother, first to have to bear children when she is still a child and immature, and secondly to see them die one after another after all the pain of bearing them and the trouble of tending them; all because she was sacrificed by the stupidity of her parents and compelled to undertake these serious responsibilities before her body was ready for them or her mind had been trained to carry them out.

CHAUDHRIJI: Your charges are, I fear, correct.

SOCRATES: And yet one more thing, Chaudhriji. Your son is still a boy and wants playthings, not a wife?

CHAUDHRI: Well?

SOCRATES: And yet you hand over to his charge, for better or for worse, another human being?

CHAUDHRI: Yes, and why not?

SOCRATES: And the husband has not learnt self-control, nor has he learnt to respect people or what respect means?

CHAUDHRI: That is correct.

SOCRATES: And his mother, as far as he has observed, gets no izzat at home and is more a drudge than a companion to you.

CHAUDHRI: I fear so, Socrates. Your accusations are hard, but true.

SOCRATES: And the poor little girl you hand over to his tender mercies is untrained and uncultured and uneducated, and can command no respect and is entitled to none?

CHAUDHRI: No, certainly not.

SOCRATES: Then your child husband starts by not respecting his wife, and will never learn to respect her, and she will never command his respect. At best she will be his plaything, and when the poor boy tires of that she will be his drudge, and, having never learnt self-control, there is nothing to prevent his bullying her and knocking her about if he is so inclined.

CHAUDHRI: I admit all this, Socrates!

SOCRATES: Poor girl, poor boy, and poor country that allows this to go on century after century!

A RIDDLE

SOCRATES was sitting with the grey-beards, late in the afternoon, when a man came up and joined them, with dust on his shoes and clothes as if he had walked far. With a sigh of relief he sat down and started puffing away at the ever-ready hookah.

'Whence come you, O villager?' asked Socrates, after he had given him time to puff away the worst of his fatigue.

VILLAGER: I have been to court to give evidence, and a long and troublesome job it was, too.

SOCRATES: Why, my friend, it's your best hobby.

VILLAGER: They keep you waiting all day till you've forgotten what you came to say, and then all of a sudden they shout for you, and if you don't answer on the second they get ever so angry, and when you go in they all shout questions at you at once till you don't know where you are.

SOCRATES: What sort of questions?

VILLAGER: Well, they start off, all in one breath, with your name and your father's age—I mean your age and your father's name—and your profession, and so on. Fancy asking a zamindar his profession!

SOCRATES: Fancy indeed! I should have thought that that at least was obvious without asking.

VILLAGER: Certainly it was.

SOCRATES: Well, what did you say?

VILLAGER: Why, farming, of course. What else did you think I should say?

SOCRATES (*slowly and deliberately*): Well, from my somewhat extensive observation of your habits, my friend, I should have thought that a truer description of your profession would have been ——

VILLAGER (*eagerly*): What, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Hookah-kashi![1]

[1] Pulling at the hookah.

When the villagers had stopped chuckling at their friend's disaster, Socrates remarked quietly:

'I want to ask you villagers which is the implement upon the development and improvement of which you and your ancestors have spent the most time and thought, and in the perfection of which the greatest variety of material and the greatest amount of ingenuity have been utilized.'

VILLAGERS: The plough?

SOCRATES: No, certainly not.

VILLAGERS: The farmer's cart?

SOCRATES: No.

VILLAGERS: The well?

SOCRATES: No; guess again.

VILLAGERS: The charsa?

SOCRATES: Impossible.

VILLAGERS: Are you serious, Socrates, or are you up to your old tricks again?

SOCRATES: I was never more serious in my life.

VILLAGERS: Then we cannot guess the answer to your question.

SOCRATES: Shall I tell you?

VILLAGERS: Do, please.

SOCRATES: Promise not to be angry.

VILLAGERS: How can we be angry with our best friend?

SOCRATES: Well then, I'll tell you, but I'm sure you'll be annoyed.

VILLAGERS: No, we won't.

SOCRATES: Then here it is—THE HOOKAH!

DARBY AND JOAN

Old man and woman at work: the one at the hookah and the other at the spinning wheel

HANJI[1] AND CO-EDUCATION

SOCRATES came into the village past the new school, and peeped in, but saw only boys in the big classroom. Between there and the chaupāl, however, he saw a lot of little girls, of nine or ten years old, playing in the muck and pretending to make cow-dung cakes. They were not a bit clean, either. Socrates saw no one about and went on, grumbling to himself as he walked, 'I've got a rod in pickle for my friends to-day. Whenever will they do what they promise? Why, they swore time and again they'd send their girls to school, and there's still not a single girl to be seen there. They'll break my heart with their Hāṅji,[1] Hāṅji, and nothing to show for it. Hāṅji kē bachā![2] I'll Hāṅji them when I see that old lambardar. He talks me smoothly, as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and then does nothing, and the rest of the village take their cue from him. I'm tired of him!'

As he reached the chaupāl, 'Rām, Rām, Socratesji,' cried the lambardar; 'it's a pleasure to see you again in the village'.

SOCRATES: Rām, Rām, Lambardarji. (*Aside*) It's little enough pleasure to me, you old deceiver. (*Aloud*) Have you done everything I told you last time, old man?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, sir.

SOCRATES (*aside*): There he goes again! (*Aloud*) Shābāsh! I am delighted to hear it. Then the pit, six feet deep, is ready at last?

LAMBARDAR: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Then let's go and look at it at once.

LAMBARDAR: Why bother, Socrates? Any time will do.

SOCRATES: No time like the present, you know, Lambardarji. (*Aside*) I'll bet it's not yet more than three feet deep. (*Aloud*) Let's go right away and have a look. I do love looking at work well and truly done. It's so rare and so refreshing. Come along. Let's see, it's down this lane, isn't it?

[1] Yes, sir; Hāṅ (nasal n) = yes; ji = sir. [2] Children of 'Yes, sir'.

LAMBARDAR: No—yes—no—well, you can get to it that way—but, but why worry just now, Socrates? You've come a long way and would like to sit and rest a bit, I dare say, this hot weather.

SOCRATES: Lambardarji, have you ever known me tired?

LAMBARDAR: No, I can't really say I ever have; anyway, you've never admitted it or acted as if you were when there was work to be done.

SOCRATES: Well, why this sudden anxiety now?

LAMBARDAR: I don't know at all. I just thought you might like to sit down for a bit, you know.

SOCRATES: Look here, Lambardarji, look me straight in the eyes and tell me plainly, is that pit six feet deep?

LAMBARDAR: Well, now you are so particular, perhaps it is not quite six feet deep yet. But I was working on it when I saw you coming and it's practically ready.

SOCRATES: That was suspiciously like a hookah that I saw you put down as I came round the corner, Lambardarji!

LAMBARDAR: Impossible, Socrates, at this time in the morning.

SOCRATES: Well, let that pass. Is your pit five feet deep?

LAMBARDAR: Well, you are particular, Socrates. Perhaps it's not quite five feet; no, I should think it possibly is not exactly five feet, but it's as good as five feet deep, Socrates—yes, quite!

SOCRATES: Very well, let's go and measure it.

LAMBARDAR: No, please don't bother, Socrates; it's some way from here.

SOCRATES: Well, is it waist-deep?

LAMBARDAR: No, not quite waist-deep yet, perhaps.

SOCRATES: Is it knee-deep—one hāth[1] shall we say?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, it's a full hāth deep, Socrates, I'll swear to it. Haven't I been working at it for hours with my own hands?

SOCRATES: I'm sure you have, but don't bother to make an oath about it. Oaths are hard things, or should be!

Just then several of the villagers came up and found the lambardar looking rather uncomfortable and Socrates a little hot and irritated.

[1] Literally, a hand, the usual village measure from the finger tips to the elbow, 1½ feet.

VILLAGERS: Well, what is it, to-day, lambardarji? Has the sage caught you out again? It won't be the first time if he has!

LAMBARDAR: Silence, brothers!

SOCRATES: Why silence, lambardarji? Rām, Rām, zamindāro.[1] The lambardar has been very kindly describing to me how he has dug his beautiful pit.

VILLAGERS: What pit, O sage?

SOCRATES: Why, the new rubbish pit he promised to dig last time I was here.

VILLAGERS: Oh, really?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, you all know it very well; the new one at the corner of my gatwār.[2]

VILLAGERS: Oh yes, we know; that one those Chumārs were scratching at last night. Yes, that's almost one hāth deep now, Socrates, a fine pit.

SOCRATES (*aside*): Alas for promises and alas for the truth! (*Aloud*) Well, anyway, you've all sent your girls to school now, as you so faithfully promised me when we discussed it last time?

VILLAGERS: We haven't, Socrates. To tell you the truth, our bhaibands told us not to, and said we must have a girls' school first, and then we can send them.

SOCRATES: Who is going to teach at the girls' school?

VILLAGERS: Why, a woman, of course.

SOCRATES: Where's she going to come from?

VILLAGERS: We don't know. The district board will send her.

SOCRATES: Where will the district board get her?

VILLAGERS: We can't say.

SOCRATES: Is there an educated woman in this village?

VILLAGERS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Or in the next?

VILLAGERS: No.

SOCRATES: Or in any village within a dozen kōs[3] from here?

VILLAGERS: Not that we know of.

LAMBARDAR: Certainly not, there are no literate zamindar women in any of our villages.

SOCRATES: Then where will she come from? From the towns?

[1] O farmers. [2] Farmyard. [3] One kōs = 1½ mile.

VILLAGERS: No; town women will never come to this outlandish spot; and if they did they would not understand us, nor we them, and they'd do no good to others; there's nowhere they could live either.

SOCRATES: Then it looks as if you'll never get a teacher for your girls' school till some of your own women learn a bit?

VILLAGERS: That seems so.

SOCRATES: And till you send your girls to the boys' school none of your village women are ever going to begin to learn anything.

VILLAGERS: It looks very much like it, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Besides, wasn't it you who were saying only the other day that you already paid too many taxes, and thought that they ought to be reduced?

VILLAGERS: That's right, we pay far too much.

SOCRATES: Well, if you all want girls' schools, they'll have to find buildings as well as teachers; or are you going to lend them your chaupāl again?

VILLAGERS: God forbid! We've only just got it back from the boys' school. They borrowed it to start a boys' school five years ago, and said they'd build their own house in a year and give us back our chaupāl. Well, they've only just built the new school and we didn't get back into our chaupāl till a week ago. No; we won't lend it again in a hurry—certainly not for a girls' school.

SOCRATES: There you are! Schools cost a mint of money, and so do teachers. There are about fourteen hundred villages in the district, and they've built schools in about two hundred of them so far, and already you want yet another school in each village for the girls, and in the same breath you want your taxes reduced. You aren't a bit unreasonable, are you?

VILLAGERS: We do seem to be, Socrates, we fear.

SOCRATES: Besides, some of you observe purdah, don't you?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that is so. Some of us do, but we ourselves don't, we are glad to say.

SOCRATES: Well, some of your girls will want a purdah school. Will those that don't observe purdah go to a purdah school and learn purdah?

VILLAGERS: Certainly not! God forbid that those of us whose women do not keep purdah should ever learn the habit at school.

We'd rather they didn't go to school at all. Why, purdah is impossible in a village, where there's so much work for the women to do, and those who have to keep purdah are getting poorer every year and their families are dying out from ill-health.

SOCRATES: You are right there. Purdah is a terrible handicap to villagers. So, then, many villages will want two girls' schools, one for the purdah and one for the non-purdah girls?

VILLAGERS: Yes, that's right.

SOCRATES: And no more taxes either! So that puts separate girls' schools out of the question, I think, for the ordinary village?

VILLAGERS: It looks like it, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And even if you get your girls' school, who is going to inspect it and see that all is going well?

VILLAGERS: A lady, of course.

SOCRATES: And how's she going to get to this out-of-the-way village? How often does the inspector visit the boys' school?

VILLAGERS: Once in three months, we dare say, and he always says it's a terribly difficult and troublesome place to visit.

SOCRATES: So you'll be lucky if your lady inspector comes once a year?

VILLAGERS: Probably.

SOCRATES: And a lot of good your girls' school will do, with no one to visit it and examine the girls and see that it's going on all right!

VILLAGERS: It certainly won't do much good unless it's pretty regularly visited. Even we know that, Socrates.

Socrates did not seem to have quite done with the subject, however, and after a moment's silence he suddenly started again.

SOCRATES: You don't give much izzat to your womenfolk, do you? When you are riding along the road and you see a woman ahead, you just shout 'Hutt, aurat, hutt!'[1] don't you?

VILLAGERS: You've rubbed that in again and again, Socrates. Why do you keep harking back to it?

SOCRATES: But I'm right, am I not?

VILLAGER: Yes, we fear you are.

SOCRATES: And your conscience is beginning to prick you a,

[1] 'Out of the way, woman, out of the way!'

bit about it now, I think, isn't it? And you are getting a bit ashamed of yourselves in this matter, eh?

LAMBARDAR: Yes, I believe that's so, Socrates. If you tell us often enough about a thing, we begin to think about it, even if we do nothing, and we discuss it among ourselves and it sinks in; and in this case we're bound to admit we are all wrong, and I think you'll find things gradually improve.

SOCRATES: Yes; but surely the children are the best ones to teach this new lesson?

ALL VILLAGERS (*eagerly*): Certainly they are. We've always told you that. Leave us grown-ups alone and teach your new-fangled notions to the children.

SOCRATES: Yes, but how are the children to learn to respect their mothers and sisters? Certainly not from you!

VILLAGERS: No, we fear not.

SOCRATES: Then, where will you teach them?

VILLAGERS: At school, we suppose.

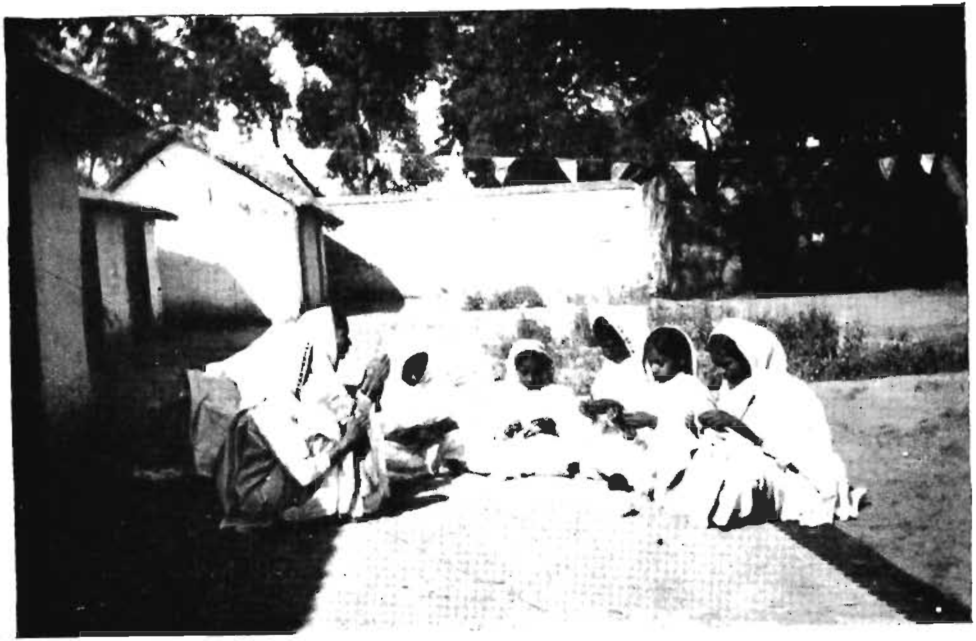
SOCRATES: Yes; but how will you teach them if only the boys are at school, and how will the girls become worthy of respect if they get no schooling and remain dirty and ignorant?

VILLAGERS: Those are difficulties, certainly.

SOCRATES: Don't you think, too, that as long as you hide the girls away separately in one corner of the village—segregate them, as the doctors say—to teach them, so long will your bad old ways continue? If you want the boys to respect their mothers and sisters, you must send them when they are quite small to the same school, where the master, and in time, I hope, the mistress, will teach the boys, by practice and precept, to respect the little girls at school with them, as well as their mothers at home; and the little girls, by learning lessons with the boys and being treated just the same, will realize they are as good as the boys, and not inferior creatures, and will respect themselves, and, by their schooling, will become worthy of respect. And when they grow up and marry, they will be honoured by their husbands and pass on these lessons to their children.

VILLAGERS: That seems perfectly reasonable, Socrates, but your ideals will take many years to reach.

SOCRATES: Then start at once by sending the little girls to school. It is unfair to expect boys who have been to school to



A KNITTING LESSON AT THE DOMESTIC SCHOOL

respect mothers who are utterly ignorant and illiterate, and sisters whose only ideas are dung-cake-making and the wearing of jewellery. I tell you, villagers, you miss a great deal in life. All the good I ever learnt I learnt from my mother, and her memory is the most sacred thing I have.

VILLAGERS: She must have been a very honourable lady.

SOCRATES: She was; but no more than the mother of every one of you should be to you—and will be, my friends, when you bring up your girls properly and hold your women in honour. And what is more, O zamindars, it is from their mother that my children are now learning all these lessons.

VILLAGERS: That does not surprise us, Socrates, for has she not visited this very village, and looked at all our babies and told their mothers how to bring them up; and did she not take the finest baby of all in her own hands and hold her up—it was a girl baby too!—for all to see and tell us to bring them all up like that?

LAMBARDAR: And it was a Chumār's baby at that!

VILLAGERS: And have we not seen her own children, too, playing outside her tent? They are clean and bright enough. Their clothes must have all come from England, so warm and good they were.

SOCRATES: Quite wrong, my friend. They were all made by the children's mother, and clothes just like them are being made by your own women in the Domestic School, where we are training women teachers for your village schools. So send your little girls to school, and teach the little boys to honour and respect them. If you want good children you must have good mothers, and mothers can't be good unless they are honoured and respected.

VILLAGERS: We will tackle our bhaibands again on these lines, Socrates, and persuade them to let us send our girls to the new boys' school—well, it is a boys' school now—it will then be just the village school.

SOCRATES: Yes, that's better, the village school. And if those bhaibands of yours won't see reason, let me have a go at them—if they really exist, that is, and you are not just hiding your own laziness and conservatism behind some imaginary bhaibands who object to all change. I've often been more than a bit suspicious about these bhaibands of yours, my friends.

VILLAGERS: Well, sometimes, we dare say, your suspicions

may be well-founded, Socrates, but in this particular case, of course, our caste fellows feel rather strongly in the matter.

SOCRATES : Yes, I can understand that ; pardon me for uttering my unworthy thoughts.

LAMBARDAR : No need to ask us for pardon, Socrates. I am afraid you are right nine times out of ten in what you say about us.

SOCRATES : Possibly ninety-nine times out of a hundred, eh ? Well, good-bye, friends ; I have already been here too long to-day, and must hurry away.

VILLAGERS : Rām, Rām, Socrates ; Rām, Rām.

GOOD-BYE

SOCRATES came into the chaupāl looking very grave, and the villagers guessed something more than usually serious had occurred—more than a bad smell or a dirty child.

SOCRATES: I am a sad man to-day, villagers. I must say good-bye and leave you.

VILLAGERS: Why, old man?

SOCRATES: Well, I have children of my own, and must take them to their home and put them to school and see my native land again. I love you and your village and am very loth to leave you, but go I must and I cannot wait any more.

VILLAGERS: What shall we do when you are gone? We shall slip back into the old, dirty, wasteful ways.

SOCRATES: No, you won't; you have learnt that cleanliness means health and wealth, that waste brings want, and that a cultured wife means a happy home and bonny children.

VILLAGERS: That's all very well, but you know how slack we really are and how quarrelsome, and how difficult it is for us to join together for any good purpose.

SOCRATES: You join quick enough for evil, my friends. That I do know.

VILLAGERS: There you go, Socrates. Even on your last day here your tongue is still sharp; but it's true enough what you say, and we don't see how all this good work you have taught us is to go on.

SOCRATES: Then you must combine and keep it going.

VILLAGERS: How?

SOCRATES: Call in the co-operative people and form a society.

VILLAGERS: How can that be done?

SOCRATES: Well, first you make the society, and then all the new ways and habits are passed as rules, and you are bound to keep them; if you don't, the other members fine you.

VILLAGERS: That's a good idea, but how will it be kept going?

SOCRATES: By the co-operative staff, just as they keep all your other banks going.

VILLAGERS: Very well, we will do that at once.

SOCRATES: Well, good-bye, friends. My tongue has been sharp at times, but I love you and am sorry to go.

VILLAGERS: Socrates, you have completely changed us and turned us into happy, healthy, comfortable human beings. May God bless you and bring you back quick!

SOCRATES: Back quick? How am I going to come back again?

VILLAGERS: Of course, you must.

SOCRATES: Well, I'll tell you what. If you carry on all the new things we have started together and don't drop back into your old, dirty ways, I will promise to come back.

VILLAGERS: We promise faithfully.

SOCRATES: I know what a zamindar's promise is!

VILLAGERS: Your old tongue again, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Sorry, friends, but I've known you for many years now.

VILLAGERS: But this is a pakka[1] promise; and haven't you taught us to be men of our word, and aren't our children growing up truthful now?

SOCRATES: Yes, that is so; and if you will keep your promise and spread the light abroad in other districts, so that Gurgaon uplift shall become Indian uplift, I will surely return to see you all again and how you are faring.

VILLAGERS: And perhaps you will have some more suggestions then for our betterment?

SOCRATES: Surely; we have only made a beginning so far.

VILLAGERS: Oh dear! hard and steep is the path of progress.

SOCRATES: There you are right. Each step brings new difficulties and problems which have to be faced and settled.

VILLAGERS: But your country at least is perfect by now, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Oh dear, no. There is still an immense lot to do, in spite of all our progress; in fact, I think the more progress the more problems, and I hope I may be able to help a bit.

[1] Sure, certain, genuine.

VILLAGERS: Don't get too interested and stay there, Socrates. If what you say is right, we shall want you again before very long.

SOCRATES: Why?

VILLAGERS: Because we are determined now to make progress, and you say the more progress the more problems. So hurry back please, Socrates.

SOCRATES: You keep your promise and I'll keep mine.

VILLAGERS: Very well, that's pakka.

SOCRATES: Good-bye, friends, and God be with you!

VILLAGERS: God bless you, Socrates; good-bye!

L'ENVOI

THE news of Socrates' approaching departure soon spread, and the animals began talking about it too. 'Buzzzz,' said the mosquito, 'I'm glad he's going. I'm the last of my tribe in this village. They've drained all the old pools of water and they put oil on any water that collects in the rains, so that there's nowhere for me to lay my eggs; and the houses are so light and clean and there's so little rubbish inside or outside that I cannot find a place to live in.'

'That's my trouble, too,' said the fly; 'nowhere to lay my eggs and nothing to eat, as all the food is covered up.'

'What about me?' said the flea, hopping feebly. 'I like a dark place, and the houses are all light and airy nowadays.'

'You can easily carry on,' said the rat. 'I'm far more unhappy than you. If I show my nose in the houses they blow poison gas into my home, and if I go into the fields they do the same there. Besides, my eyes won't stand the light, and every room has windows now.'

'Bow-wow,' said the dog. 'I love Socrates. I've got a home to live in. I'm well fed; they've given me a name—look at this lovely collar; and I've been taught how to guard the house, how to catch rats and all manner of useful things. I'm the friend of man now. Socrates ki jai, jai, jai!'[1]

'Wuff, wuff,' said the village pig. 'My food has all gone now. They keep the place clean and put all the rubbish in the pits. I shall have to go elsewhere.'

The game in the banni also started discussing the changes that Socrates had brought about. The partridges were very annoyed. 'In the old days,' said an old hen bird, 'the grass and rubbish in the fields were so thick that we could hide all day in them with safety; now they've started using iron ploughs the fields are so clean and smooth, there's nowhere to hide our coveys while the crops are

[1] Hurrah for Socrates!

growing up.' 'Never mind that,' said an old cock bird. 'There's nowhere even to sleep safe at night, now they've cut down the hins and cactus; these kikars are very bare. Give me back the old days. Away with Socrates!'

'Wah, wah,' said a starling, 'since they took to iron ploughs they turn up so many grubs for me that I can bring up two families a year now. Socrates ki jai!'

Just then a wild boar came past, and he was full of grumbles. 'Why, when I was young, we used to live in peace in the bannis all day and feed on the sugar-cane at night. These new canes are so hard my old teeth can't touch them. Besides, they farm the banni for grass and firewood nowadays, there's no shelter for me and I have to go all the way back to the kadir[1] jungles every morning now. Wugh, wugh—why, there he comes! I must be off quick.'

'All right, old enemy,' said Socrates, 'you are safe from me this morning. I've forgotten to bring my spear.'

A young cow with a lovely calf saw him coming, and said, 'Good riddance of that nasty man! Why, he said these dirty humans were only just better than cattle. Better than me, indeed! Look at me and my calf. I clean her a dozen times a day, and till quite recently the humans didn't clean their children once a month. Besides, look at my breeding. I'm pure Hissar.'

'Silence, silly!' said an old cow standing by, and gave her a butt in the ribs. 'You're only pure Hissar because Socrates made the humans get your ancestors from Hissar! And you're too young to know how we used to live till he came along. Look at our lovely airy stable. We used to live in darkness and dirt and drink filthy foul water, and were lucky if we ever got a good meal. Our water is now clean and our food ample. Don't complain, you foolish girl. Socrates made the humans stop burning our dung and made them take it all to the fields, and since then we've never been short of food. Just you join with me and say, "Socrates ki jai!"'

'Hee-haw, hee-haw,' said the old donkey. 'I get good food now. I don't have to scavenge for filth on the muck heaps and jostle with the pigs for my meals.'

[1] River bed.

'Kook, kook, kook, kook,' said the peacock. 'I used to sit on the muck heaps; now I preen myself in a lovely little flower garden. Clean and pretty women and children feed me every evening. Kook, kook, kook, kook! Socrates ki jai! Kook, kook kook, kook!'

GLOSSARY

8-A. A celebrated Punjab wheat, developed at Lyallpur and now widely sown in the Punjab. It gives a longer straw and a heavier yield of grain, and is suitable for wells, canals and dry farming as well.

ĀBĀDI. The village site where the people live in houses packed like sardines; no room for gardens or anything. A survival of the days when villages had to have walls round them. We want the people to spread a bit now, and those who have wells on their farms to live on them, instead of herding in the unhealthy slums of the old ābādi.

ĀP HI HOWĒ. It happens of itself. The aorist form 'howē' typifies the fatalist attitude of the villager towards the doings of nature.

ARHAR. A pulse, growing five or six feet high, with woody stem and branches.

AURAT. A woman.

BĀBU. A literate man, or clerk; often used by villagers of anyone not dressed in village homespun, as almost the first result of learning to read and write is to abandon village dress.

BACH. The distribution of the village land revenue demand over the holdings of the peasants. This is done every harvest by the patwari.

BĀCHŌN KĒ BĀCHĒ. Children of children.

BADNĀM. To give a bad name to, speak evil of.

BANIA. The shopkeeping and money-lending caste.

BANNI. A word usually applied to an area of common land, of varying size, reserved from time immemorial for trees and grass by village edict. Now almost invariably overgrown with trees and shrubs, useless either for grazing or firewood. Owing to the decay of village organization, there is no authority to administer and develop this trust, and it does more harm than good to the village.

BARA DOUBLE PARMESHAR. 'Bara,' or 'burra,' means big;

'double' is borrowed from English, and in present language means out-size or extra large; 'Parmeshar' means Providence.

BHAIBAND. Caste-fellow; 'bhai,' brother, kinsman; 'band' is the root of the verb meaning to bind.

BIGHA. A measure of land; a 'kacha bigha' is about one-fifth, and a 'pakka bigha' about two-thirds, of an acre. The peasant invariably thinks in bighas, although he can often understand acres.

BODI. Weak, exhausted; invariably applied by Gurgaon villagers to themselves, their cattle and their land, and, usually implying that things were better in former years. This idea of progressive deterioration is very common in Gurgaon District, and, considering the facts of village economy, farming, cattle-breeding, etc., it is very likely true.

BRAHMANI. Applied to a bull loosed, from motives of piety, for stud purposes. From motives of economy, however, the most miserable young animals are usually selected for this purpose, thus perverting an institution designed to improve the cattle into the surest way of ruining the breed. Once a young bull is branded and turned loose in this way it is the height of impiety to castrate it, although now in Gurgaon it is at last realized that it is even worse to allow bad bulls to go on breeding.

CHABUTRA. A raised platform, erected outside houses and shops to sit on, display wares, etc. A favourite form of encroachment even in the narrowest streets and lanes.

CHARPOY. String bed; the usual seat in a village, where a chair is still an exotic.

CHARSA. A leather bag, used with a rope and pulley, to raise water from a well for irrigating crops, and requiring four able-bodied men and four bullocks to manipulate. Probably the most expensive form of irrigation known to man. The man working the charsa gives his orders to the others in the form of a rather picturesque chant.

CHAUDHRI. Chaudhriji, the courtesy title of a farmer or country gentleman. There is a title for every kind and class of person in northern India, and, as the title is always used instead of the name, names are of little account.

CHAUPĀI. A primitive village glee party. In parts of the Gurgaon District these are formed in early spring and go from village to village singing. We have roped them in to compose and

sing uplift songs, and they are extremely effective, as hundreds of people will sit for hours at a time and listen to them. The majority of the party are usually boys, and they generally have a small harmonium, as well as cymbals, etc., to accompany their singing.

CHAUPĀL. An open building with a raised platform (chabutra) in front, used for communal purposes. Each village has as many as it wants for its several sub-divisions, but there is always at least one. Women are not allowed in it, of course, and it serves the purpose of a village club or public-house, although nothing is sold there. The men collect there and sit and smoke and gossip. A lot of precious time is wasted at the chaupāl, which would be far better spent tidying up the village!

CHUHRA. A very low caste of untouchables.

CHUMĀR. A caste of untouchables which works in hides and leather.

DAI. Midwife; untrained, except for what she picked up from her predecessors; in Gurgaon, of the lowest caste, with no notion of cleanliness—and often partially blind.

DARZI. Tailor caste.

D.C. Abbreviation of Deputy Commissioner, the chief official and head of the district.

DOOB. A grass of great value for horses and cattle; the best fodder grass in northern India.

FAUJI. Military or ex-military man. ('Fauj' = an army.)

GATWĀR. Fenced-in yard, where straw and dung-cakes are stored, and cattle sometimes penned.

GHI. Clarified butter; universally used for cooking in India. Made from milk by continuous simmering, and responsible for the ruin of agriculture, as it demands an infinite supply of dung-cakes. The solution of the agricultural problem in India is the rescue of the cow-dung from the housewife—and it is nothing like as difficult a problem as it is usually made out to be!

GOWAR. A pulse, with somewhat the habit of the broad bean in England.

HĀṄJI. (Nasal n.) 'Hāṅ' = yes, 'ji' = sir.

HĀṄJI KĒ BACHĒ. Children of 'Yes, sir'.

HĀTH. Literally, hand, the ordinary village measure, from the finger tips to the elbow, 1½ feet.

HĀKIM. A ruler, often a jack-in-office.

HINS. A big, solid evergreen prickly shrub.

HISSAR. There is a Government cattle farm here, which provides magnificent stud bulls of the Hariana breed at concession rates to those wise enough to want them.

HOOKAH. The water pipe, or hubble-bubble; a great waster of time.

HUTT. Get out of the way!

IZZAT. Respect, self-respect, 'face'; a very expressive word in India.

JAI. A cry corresponding to Vive or Hurrah; used in India instead of cheering, although the schools have made cheering now quite common.

JĀL. An evergreen shrub or tree, useless for any purpose.

JAMABANDI. The record of rights in the land, revised every four years for every village; the basis of the land revenue system of the Punjab. A sort of Domesday Book.

JEMADAR. The lowest rank of Indian commissioned officer in the army.

JHAO. Tamarisk, growing in huge areas in the beds of rivers above the cold-weather level of the water.

JHEEL. Swamp or lake, temporary or permanent.

JI. A title, used alone or as an enclitic, denoting respect and often affection. It is less formal and more familiar than 'Sir'.

KACHA. Literally, unripe; used of anything inferior or unready. The opposite of 'pakka,' which means ripe or cooked, and is used of everything proper, well-organized, in good order; e.g. a pakka road is a metalled road, and a kacha road an unmetalled one. 'Kacha' applied to weights and measures means a smaller kind of measure generally, only used now away from the towns, where weights and measures have been more or less standardized, in relation to English measures.

KĀDIR. That part of a river valley liable to be flooded in the monsoon.

KANUNGO. The official next above the patwari in the revenue hierarchy.

KARĪL. A useless shrub, with a pretty salmon-coloured flower.

KHARĀS. Bullock-driven flour-mill in common use in the

central Punjab, but still to be made universal in Gurgaon, to save the women from the drudgery of the flour-mill and give them more time to look after their homes and children.

KHĀTI. The carpenter caste.

KIKAR. Thorny acacia, useful as firewood and timber, and its foliage and seeds as fodder. Quick-growing and very easy to establish.

KŌS. One mile and a half, a measure still in common village use.

LAMBARDAR. Village headman, one or more to each village according to its size; hereditary office, appointments made by Government. The lambardar represents Government in the village and is responsible for the collection of the land revenue, but he is rapidly losing his authority over the villagers.

LOHĀR. Iron-working caste.

MĀLI. Market-gardening caste.

MĀLIK KI MARZI. The will of the owner of the universe. 'Mālik' means 'owner'.

MAUND. About 80 lb. avoirdupois.

MĒLA. A fair; usually of religious origin, as in England.

MISRJI. 'Misr' is an old name for a Brahman, 'ji,' for respect.

MISTRI. A mechanic.

PAKKA. See KACHA.

PATTI. Sub-division of a village.

PATWARI. The lowest grade in the revenue hierarchy responsible for the papers of one or more villages. The papers contain all the rights in the land, both of owners and tenants, all the details of crops, rents, land revenue and everything else. The patwari is a man of great power, both for good and for evil. His pay starts at about £20 per annum (including fees).

PERSIAN WHEEL. An endless chain of buckets, operated by bullocks, for raising water from wells for irrigation. In Gurgaon miniature wheels, worked by hand, have been designed for raising drinking water.

RABI. The harvest which is sown in the autumn and reaped in the spring.

RĀM, RĀM. Usual form of greeting among Hindus. Rām means God.

RISALDĀR. Senior Indian commissioned cavalry officer.

SARKAR. Government.

SARSON. An oil seed with a long woody stalk.

SEER. About 2 lb. avoirdupois; 40 seers go to a maund.

SHĀBĀSH. Well done! Bravo!

SHISHAM. A timber tree.

SUBEDAR. Senior Indian commissioned infantry officer.

SUBEDAR-MAJOR. The senior Indian officer of an infantry battalion.

SUFEDPOSH. Means clothed in white. The title of a leading country gentleman, selected by Government to help it in all its work, in a group of villages, and given a small honorarium for doing so. He is junior to the zaildar.

T.A. Travelling allowance, an important item to rural officials.

TACCAVI. Money advanced by Government to peasants, to finance agriculture, at a low rate of interest, and recovered in easy instalments.

TAHSILDAR. A sub-collector of revenue. A tahsil, or taluk, is a sub-division of a district.

TARAQQI. Progress, development.

TIL. An oil seed.

UPLA. Dried cakes of cow-dung (used for fuel).

ZAILDAR. The leading country squire, selected and paid a small honorarium by Government, to help it in all its work in a group of villages, called a zail.

ZAMINDAR. The owner or farmer of land; a large owner, a small peasant proprietor, or even a tenant farmer; it includes everyone living on the soil, however large or however small his interest or holding. The word usually implies membership of what are known as the agricultural tribes, though anyone farming land, whether of menial caste or of money-lending caste, is equally entitled to describe himself as a zamindar. This is its meaning in the Punjab, but in the United Provinces it merely means a big landowner.